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# Homeschool Literacy Workshop

— For Parents of Children with Dyslexia or other  
Language-Based Learning Differences —

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# What is dyslexia?

“Dyslexia is a learning disability in reading. People with dyslexia have trouble reading at a good pace and without mistakes. They may also have a hard time with reading comprehension, spelling, and writing. But these challenges aren’t a problem with intelligence.” - [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org)

“Perhaps as many as 15–20% of the population as a whole have some of the symptoms of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words. Not all of these will qualify for special education, but they are likely to struggle with many aspects of academic learning.” - [International Dyslexia Association](https://www.ida-dyslexia.org/)

- NOT about intelligence.
- Often very capable and gifted in areas: problem solving, art, computer science, engineering, music, etc. More on this later.
- Life-long. Dyslexia isn’t something to be cured, but people with it can learn to be successful readers, writers, and spellers with structured, systematic, explicit, instruction in reading, writing, and language. More on this later.

# What's the best way to teach students with dyslexia?

“People with dyslexia don't outgrow it. But there are teaching approaches and strategies that can help them improve their reading skills and manage the challenges.” - Understood.org

“Dyslexia is a lifelong condition. With proper help, many people with dyslexia can learn to read and write well... Most people with dyslexia need help from a teacher, tutor, or therapist specially trained in using a multisensory, structured language approach. It is important for these individuals to be taught by a systematic and explicit method that involves several senses (hearing, seeing, touching) at the same time. Many individuals with dyslexia need one-on-one help so that they can move forward at their own pace. In addition, students with dyslexia often need a great deal of structured practice and immediate, corrective feedback to develop automatic word recognition skills.” - IDA

Orton-Gillingham approach is a “direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, prescriptive way to teach reading, writing, and spelling.”

# What do parents need to know?

Understanding the basics of the brain science can help you to realize that dyslexia doesn't impact intelligence. Also, furthering your knowledge of dyslexia will help you to understand why certain tasks are challenging for your child (and help you realize their strengths, too!)

[Dyslexia and the Brain](#) by Guinevere Eden, Ph.D.(video)

[Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science](#) by Louisa Moats (article)

[Embracing Dyslexia](#) by Maryanne Wolf (video)

Improvement and growth take time!

Expect “consistent inconsistencies” - It's typical for students with a dyslexic profile to be able to do something one day and maybe not the next and then be able to the next day!

# How can you assess literacy skills at home?

Without training to interpret data, we suggest finding a free screening service (like the one we offer) and/or request testing from your school district for more data

## At home, you can:

- Have them write the alphabet (upper and lower case)
- Rhyme with your child and play word games
- Ask them to tell you sounds made by each consonant and see if they can name both sounds made by the vowels (long and short)
- Complete a writing sample (length appropriate to ability/age) - topic should be of high interest to them
- Listen to them read aloud and focus on how much effort goes into decoding individual words. Ask them to retell the story after they've read it to get a sense of their comprehension, sequencing, word recall, working memory, etc.

# What does “success” look like?

When a child starts to be eager to read and write

When they have a positive reaction to reading or being read to

When oral reading is more automatic and less effort full

When they're able to find fun in a reading/writing activity

When they notice their growth and accomplishments and feel them celebrated

# How do you talk to your child about their LD?

Use [children's literature](#) to spark discussions about what it means to learn differently.

Watch [See Dyslexia Differently](#) together and discuss any points that stand out to your child

Focus on “yet.” Your child may feel stuck on the fact that they can’t do something or they don’t know something. [Your Fantastic Elastic Brain](#) is great and informative picture book that focuses on the importance of having a [growth mindset](#) (with time/effort/optimism comes growth/improvement). Our brains are elastic and can grow and change as long as we have the attitude that they can.

[It's Called Dyslexia](#) is a title in the “Live & Learn Book Series.” This is a good tool for younger children.

Focus on strengths! You can talk to them about [famous people with dyslexia and other LDs](#). These are people who have found great success in fields that value strengths common among dyslexic and ADHD minds. [Another resource to highlight great accomplishments by people with dyslexia](#).

# What skills go into being a “good reader”?

[Reading Skills at Different Ages](#) - This is a helpful overview, but one size doesn't fit all!

**Phonemic Awareness** - Ability to identify sounds - Rhyming is a great indicator

**Phonics** - Connecting sounds to letters/letter groups - Key to decoding

**Fluency** - Reading with appropriate pace and accuracy - Able to focus on the meaning of the text, not individual words.

**Vocabulary** - Knowledge of the meaning - Built upon by talking, reading, even listening to music

**Reading Comprehension** - Able to read for understanding

# How can you foster enjoyment of reading?

**Pre-Reading** - Examine the book together, talk about the title, illustrations, give necessary background information, preview tricky vocabulary

**Read Together** - Take turns reading to share the workload. This allows for your child to take some breaks and also to listen to fluent reading by you

**Alleviate Pressure** - Allow your child to read aloud to a younger sibling or pet, situations where they know there's no risk of being judged for their pace or errors

**High-Interest Books** - In addition to [choosing the right level book](#), think about the interests of your child

**Variety** - Magazines and graphic novels can often be more exciting for children because of the visual nature and variety of content. Poems can be playful (and short!)

**Mix It Up** - Read to them. Or try choral reading, whisper reading, repeated readings, etc.

**Celebrate** - Praise your child's efforts, especially perseverance with a challenging word or concept

# Must haves?

[Homeschool Literacy Resources](#) Extensive list of resources compiled by Jen

Schedule/Routine - Make this available to your child so they know what to expect

Literacy periods should be broken into several short activities/tasks that allow time to be spent on the various skills (oral reading, reading comp, vocabulary, etc.). This allows various skills to be reviewed, practiced, or taught without the work becoming taxing to your child

The expectation that your child will be held accountable for what they've learned. If you taught a spelling rule that was appropriately reviewed/practiced, it's expected that the child will incorporate that rule into their writing and thus spell words where the rule applies correctly

Time to feel that their strengths are highlighted (science, athletics, arts, music, etc.)

# Assistive Technology

\*\* These tools and programs require instruction before use.

## What is assistive technology for reading and writing?

Learning Ally- This program offers struggling learners equitable access to the books they want to read and the grade-level content they need to read. The library of audiobooks is extensive and the recordings are human voices.

Google Read & Write - This Chrome extension provides both text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools to assist with reading, writing, and studying.

Speechify - An application that reads printed text. The goal of Speechify, created by a person with dyslexia, is to ensure that reading is not a barrier to learning.

Read Naturally - This research-based reading intervention has helped millions of students become fluent readers and make solid gains in comprehension and vocabulary.

Grammarly - This Chrome extension assists with spelling and grammar in one's work, but also assists with style and tone in a given piece of writing.

# Assistive (low tech) Technologies

Lowest tech assistive technology = paper and pencil - Encourage jotting notes to track ideas and understanding while reading

Six downloadable [graphic organizers](#) to use during reading tasks (summarizing, retelling, etc.)

Low-tech writing assistive devices - pencil grips, graph paper, other OT-based tools.

Graphic organizers are a great way to outline thinking and plan in the pre-writing stage. These are especially helpful for older students who struggle with any executive functioning skills.

[The Writing Revolution](#) is a book that provides excellent guidance in supporting student writing development through explicit instruction. The authors run professional development and trainings through their program of the same name. Check out their [website](#). Here is a [folder with PDFs of the planning tools](#) they've created. Very useful for any expository writing (writing to convey meaning).

# Parent support/encouragement?

Identification and intervention are key

Interventions need to be consistent (especially through the long summer)

Seeing growth can take time

Celebrate strengths and even the smallest victories

Finding support among other parents with a similar experience

# Helpful Perspective

Let's consider the history of literacy

How long have we had oral language? **Approx. 50,000 years**

How long have we had a written alphabet? **Egyptian hieroglyphs representing syllables approx. 4,500 years**

What allowed books to be widely available and published? **The printing press: China approx. 868 CE; Germany (Gutenberg) 1450 CE**

When did school attendance become compulsory? **In the U.S., between 1852 and 1914, the states each enacted compulsory school attendance laws.**

Humans have been speaking and listening for approximately 50,000 years

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Humans have been widely taught to read and write for only about 150 years

## More Perspective

“Each new reader comes to reading with a fresh brain--one that is programmed to speak, listen, and think, but not read. Reading requires the brain to rearrange its original parts to learn something new.”

“We are wired for sound, but we are not hardwired to read.”

By Maryanne Wolf, author of [Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain](#) and [Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World](#)

## Questions from you:

1. Getting a neuro-psych eval vs. school district testing - Is this data necessary?
2. Where is the line between accommodation and challenge?
3. If my child struggles to read accurately when reading out loud, should I be worried about his comprehension when he's reading to himself?
4. Is there a difference in the level of books my child should be reading independently vs. reading with me/being read to/listening to on audiobook?

# More Recommended Resources for You:

[Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went So Wrong](#) - Amazing six-episode podcast from American Public Media

[Overcoming Dyslexia](#), 2nd edition by Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

[The Dyslexic Advantage: Unlocking the Hidden Potential of the Dyslexic Brain](#) by Dr. Brock Eide and Dr. Fernette Eide

Hamilton Institute's 6th Annual Learning Differences Conference - 1/27/24

Orton-Gillingham training - Summer 2024

Hamilton Summer Program - Summer 2024

email [margotmiller@wheelerschool.org](mailto:margotmiller@wheelerschool.org) for more info