

Dyslexia Awareness Month

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What is Dyslexia?

A pattern of learning difficulties characterized by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding, and poor spelling.

- Often runs in families
- Can range mild to severe

Is dyslexia a subtype of Learning Disability?

Yes - if....

- Profile meets all criteria for LD diagnosis
- Involves difficulties in word reading/decoding/spelling
- Involves difficulties in underlying processing areas

Dyslexia is a helpful term to use when appropriate, because of associated resources!



Myths about Dyslexia

- Reversals b/d p/q
- Text moves around on the page
- Reading backwards
- Children are being lazy - need to try harder
- You (caregivers) just need to read to your kids more
- Dyslexia is NOT a visual/spatial issue. It is related to the sound structure of language.



Early signs parents (and teachers) can look for:

Children **MAY** have difficulty -

- Pronouncing words or retrieving words when speaking
- Learning the alphabet, letters
- Appreciating rhymes, making up rhymes
- Noticing sound or letter patterns (e.g. that “milk” and “moon” both start with the sound /m/)

What Is “Reading”, Really?

The Simple View of Reading



(Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990)

National Reading Panel Results (2000): Five Essential Areas to Include in Reading Instruction

1. Phonemic Awareness

2. Phonics

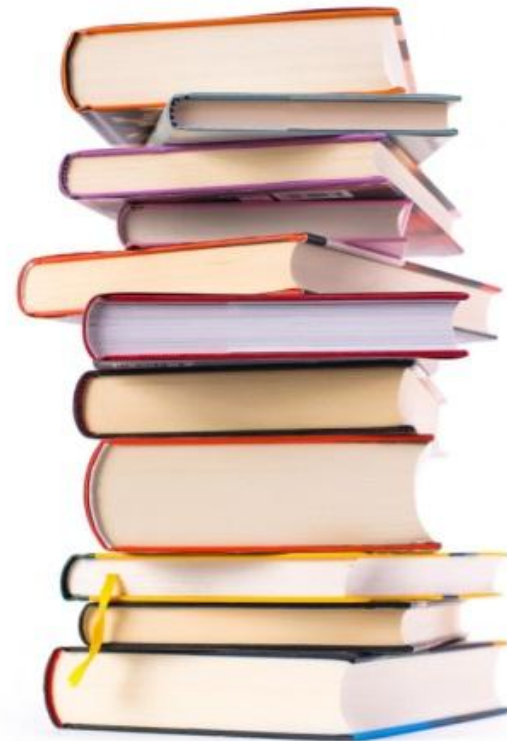
1. Fluency

1. Vocabulary

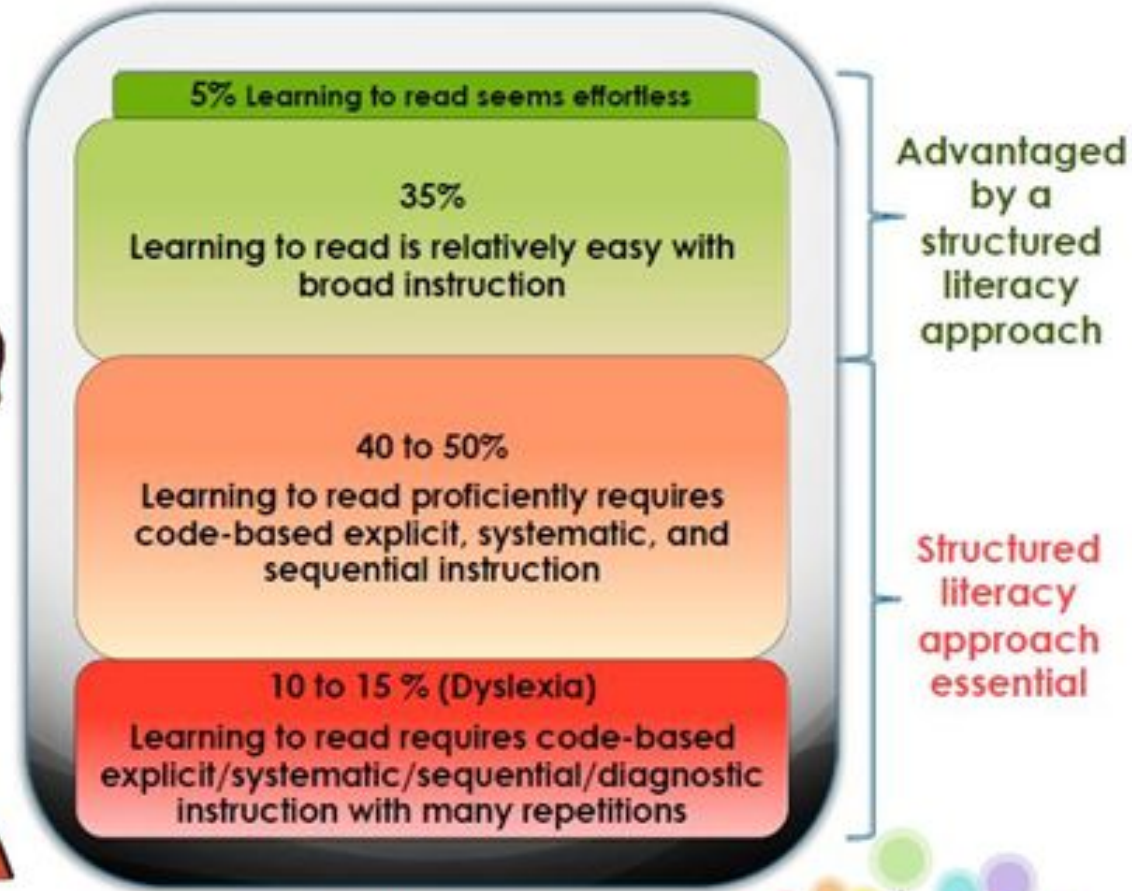
2. Comprehension

Structured Literacy

- Replacing “Whole Language”, and “Balanced Literacy”
- Based on the current science of how kids learn to read
- It’s good for all kids, but especially helpful for kids with reading challenges
- Refers to the teaching of reading with consideration to both the content and methods of instruction
 - **Content:** phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension
 - **Method:** skills are taught in a direct way and in a logical order, it is systematic, cumulative, and responsive



The Ladder of Reading



© N. Young, 2012 (Updated 2020)
Artwork by Dean Stanton
(Lyon, 1998; NRP, 2000; IDA, 2015; Hempenstall, 2016)

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How can I help my striving reader?

- Remember: Your child is doing the best they can!
- You are your child's best advocate!
- Ask lots of questions
 - What literacy screening tools are used at school? How/when are problems identified? How is that information used to make decisions about what students need?
- Communication and a healthy relationship with the school/teacher will be great assets



How to help at home

- Talk to your child's teacher about what you can do at home to help (e.g., how can I practice the key elements of structured literacy at home?)
- <https://www.understood.org/articles/en/what-is-structured-literacy>
 - Click on “For Families: How to help at Home” tab for the following articles
 - 8 ways to build phonological awareness
 - 7 ways to improve vocabulary
 - 15 phonics rules for reading and spelling



Right to Read Inquiry: Student Voice



Learning difficulties and Mental Health

- Kids with learning difficulties are at greater risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health difficulties. We need to monitor academic progress AND mental wellness.
- Prevention by helping kids improve academic skills (and confidence), but also through specific planning and support for mental health!



What student with learning difficulties *may* need!

- Caring, compassion, understanding!
- Opportunities to shine!
- Differentiated instruction, accommodations/modifications based on their unique profile of strengths and needs
- Assistive technology
- They may require intensive intervention - that is evidence based
- Ensure the whole child – with all their strengths and needs are being considered
- Ongoing monitoring of frustration, stress, anxiety, sadness
- Strong communication between school and home (and any outside agencies/tutors, etc.)

Resources

- **International Dyslexia Association** (Ontario Branch):
<https://www.idaontario.com/>
- **Reading Rockets:**
<https://www.readingrockets.org/>
- **Integra Learning Disabilities and Mental Health Program:**
<https://www.childdevelop.ca/programs/integra-learning-disabilities-and-mental-health>

If you have questions/concerns about your child and their progress in reading, please reach out to the teacher and/or the principal. Each school has access to psychology and speech/language pathologists who can help.



DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS