



Established 1915
BROWARD
County Public Schools



**A
PARENT'S GUIDE
TO
UNDERSTANDING
DYSLEXIA**

What is Dyslexia?

"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."

Source: *International Dyslexia Association*

What does this mean?

Reading is complex. It requires our brains to connect letters to sounds, put those sounds in the right order, and pull the words together into sentences and paragraphs we can read and comprehend. People with dyslexia have trouble matching the letters they see on the page with the sounds those letters and combinations of letters make. And when they have trouble with that step, all the other steps are harder.

Source: *The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity*
(<https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/>)



Check out some of the famous people with dyslexia and read about many more in the book *The Gift of Dyslexia* by Ronald Davis.



Octavia Spencer
Famous actress
with dyslexia



Steven Spielberg
Famous director
with dyslexia



Magic Johnson
Famous athlete
with dyslexia



Salma Hayek
Famous actress
with dyslexia



Whoopi Goldberg
Famous actress
with dyslexia



Common Strengths of Students With Dyslexia

Based on the book, *The Dyslexic Advantage*, by Brock and Fennete Eide.

Younger students with dyslexia may...

- Enjoy playing with blocks and puzzles
- Ask about how things work
- Easily see how things are alike
- Enjoy listening to and telling stories
- Have a good memory of things that happened
- Notice patterns easily
- Grasp the big picture easily

Older students with dyslexia may...

- Like working with their hands
- Think like an engineer
- Connect what they are learning in one class to another easily
- Make inferences easily
- Use vivid details and imagery
- Know things intuitively
- Figure out what will happen next in a movie, book, or TV show



Some Characteristics of Dyslexia

from *Understood.org*



Preschool

- Mispronouncing words
- Trouble naming common objects
- Difficulty rhyming
- Trouble remembering sequences
- Trouble remembering and following directions with multiple steps



Grades K-2

- Difficulty learning letter names, letter sounds, and familiar words
- Substituting words when reading aloud
- Difficulty separating sounds in words and blending sounds to make a word
- Having trouble remembering how words are spelled



Grades 3-5

- Confusing or skipping small words when reading
- Trouble sounding out new words and quickly recognizing common words
- Having poor spelling
- Avoiding reading or getting upset when reading



Tweens, Teens, and Adults

- Reading slowly or leaving out certain words
- Taking a long time to complete reading assignments
- Struggling to remember common abbreviations
- Trouble understanding idioms and puns
- Understanding better when text is read aloud



Dyslexia Myths versus Facts

Myths

Facts



Dyslexia is a very rare condition.



Researchers have found that as much as 20% of the population has dyslexia.



Dyslexia is a vision issue that causes people to see letters backwards and for letters to appear like they are floating.



Dyslexia is a different way of processing information that causes reading and spelling difficulties as well as numerous strengths.



Dyslexia doesn't exist--kids will just outgrow their reading problems.



Dyslexia is a well-researched condition that can be examined in brain imaging scans. **Explicit** instruction at an early age drastically improves reading outcomes.



Dyslexia is more common among boys than girls.



Although boys with dyslexia are more frequently identified, dyslexia affects both boys and girls at almost identical rates.



A person with dyslexia will never learn to read.



This is not true. The earlier children are identified with dyslexia and provided systematic instruction, the less severe their problems will be.



Kids who don't speak English can't have dyslexia.



Dyslexia exists all over the world and in all languages, but often takes longer to pick up on reading issues in kids who are bilingual than in their peers.

How Do Schools Support Students with Reading Difficulties?

Schools are guided by the BCPS **K-12 Reading Plan Assessment & Curriculum Decision Trees** that demonstrate how data results are used to determine specific reading instructional needs and **interventions** for all students. These processes help school-based teams identify struggling readers through the use of multiple assessments as a part of the **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)** framework.

Problem Identification

At the beginning of each school year, all K-2 students and those in grades 3-12 who scored below proficient on a standardized assessment, are screened using a universal reading assessment to identify students who are at-risk of not meeting grade-level expectations.

Problem Analysis/Intervention Design

Diagnostic assessments are administered to students identified as at-risk to obtain more information about their specific skills in the different areas of reading (e.g., oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension). This information is then used to develop and implement interventions to provide **direct, explicit, multisensory, and systematic** instruction for each student.

Response to Intervention

As interventions are being implemented, frequent reading assessments are administered to monitor the student's progress towards reading proficiency. These progress-monitoring assessments can help determine if the student is responding adequately to **evidence-based** instruction and interventions or if the instruction and interventions need to be modified or intensified.

Next Steps

If the progress-monitoring data indicate the student is not responding to the interventions provided, further evaluation may be warranted to determine if more intensive instruction or support is needed. In some instances, a student with reading difficulties may qualify for special education (as defined by state and local guidelines) with specially designed instruction and/or accommodations.

What About Students With Dyslexia?

Students may struggle in learning to read for many reasons. Students with dyslexia represent a subgroup of all students in school who experience difficulties learning to read. What is critical is that difficulties learning to read are identified as early as possible, and that intensive and well-targeted interventions are provided to students who are lagging behind, no matter what the cause.

Source: Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR)

If your child is having reading difficulties or you suspect your child has dyslexia, please contact your child's teacher and/or the school's Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Team.

If your child currently has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and is having reading difficulties, contact your child's ESE teacher or the school's ESE Specialist.

Helping your Child Academically, Socially, and Emotionally

Elementary Students

Secondary Students

Build Reading Skills

- Read to and with your child often and encourage your child to read many different books.
- See the BCPS K-5 Comprehensive Read-At-Home Plan for activities in each of the components of reading (see resources page).

- Encourage your child to read books that are high interest with an appropriate reading level and/or follow along with audio books—free from your local public library.
- See the BCPS 6-12 Comprehensive Read-At-Home Plan for activities in each of the components of reading (see resources page).

Build Confidence

- Read books for kids about dyslexia and/or with characters who have dyslexia (see resources page).
- Talk to your child about dyslexia in a way that makes him or her feel empowered (see resources page).

- Read books for tweens and teens about dyslexia and/or with characters that have dyslexia (see resources page).
- Teach your child to talk to his or her teachers and other adults about dyslexia and the way he or she thinks and learns best by role-playing scenarios.

Build Resilience

- Students with difficulty reading often have higher levels of anxiety. Teach your child to manage his or her anxiety by taking short breaks for movement and taking a few deep breaths when feeling frustrated.
- Help your child develop a growth mindset by recognizing improvement.

- Teach your child to reframe negative situations into learning opportunities by encouraging reflection such as: What can you do differently next time?
- Teach your child grit by replacing negative self-talk with coaching language that gives a pep talk in stressful situations. From “I can’t do this!” to “I might not get this at first, but I’m going to keep trying!”





Resources for Parents

- **Books for Teens and Tweens with Characters who Think and Learn Differently**
understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/self-advocacy/8-teen-and-tween-books-with-characters-who-learn-and-think-differently
- **Children's Books with Characters That Have Dyslexia**
theliteracynest.com/2017/10/12/childrens-books-with-dyslexia.html.html
- **International Dyslexia Association**
dyslexiaida.org/
- **BCPS Multi-Tiered System of Supports/Response to Intervention**
browardschools.com/Page/32437
- **Supporting Elementary Learners: Includes the K-5 Read-At-Home Plan**
<http://bit.ly/SupportingYoungLearners>

Your child benefits when you and the school work together to support her literacy development. Working together promotes faster development and catches trouble spots earlier.

<p>Communicate and interact often</p> <p>Find out how you will receive communication from the school and ask questions if you need more information.</p>	<p>Practice literacy skills at home</p> <p>Talk about what home literacy activities match your child's skill level.</p>
<p>Discuss literacy instruction and intervention</p> <p>Talk about how you and the school can partner to help your child and others get high quality and effective literacy instruction.</p>	<p>Address concerns together</p> <p>Discuss what your child has learned and what skills she is still working on. Share your understanding of your child's learning needs.</p>

For more information and resources on these topics, see improvingliteracy.org

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- **Supporting Secondary Learners: Includes the 6-12 Read-At-Home Plan**
browardschools.instructure.com/courses/852789

- **Talk to Your Child about Dyslexia**
dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/parents/what-parents-can-do/talking-with-your-child-about-dyslexia/
- **The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity**
dyslexia.yale.edu/
- **National Center for Improving Literacy**
improvingliteracy.org/brief/partnering-your-childs-school
- **Understood: Understanding Dyslexia in Your Child**
understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/dyslexia-in-children
- **University of Florida Dyslexia Resources**
education.ufl.edu/uflid/dyslexia-resources/

Glossary

Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Team: A multidisciplinary team of school staff who makes evidence-based decisions about student interventions and progress monitoring data

Components of Reading:

- **Oral Language:** The system for which we use spoken words to communicate knowledge, ideas, and feelings
- **Phonological Awareness:** Segmenting words into individual sounds like C-a-t and blending them together
- **High Frequency Words:** Reading common words such as “the”, “was”, and “here”
- **Phonics:** Learning how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns
- **Fluency:** The ability to read accurately, at an appropriate pace, with expression
- **Vocabulary:** The knowledge of meaning of words
- **Comprehension:** The goal of reading and understanding what was read

Evidence-Based: Instruction for which evidence of effectiveness in increasing student learning exists

Explicit: Instruction that involves directly teaching literacy concepts to students instead of them just picking up the skills from reading

Intervention: The process of addressing the specific reading needs of a student using evidence-based practices by providing direct, explicit, and systematic instruction of varying levels of frequency and/or intensity (e.g., increasing the amount of instructional time, reducing the number of students in the group)

Multisensory: Using more than one sense at a time to make connections and learn skills

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): A schoolwide approach that addresses the needs of all students, including struggling learners and students with disabilities, and integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level instructional and behavioral system to maximize student achievement and reduce problem behaviors

Progress Monitoring: Tracking student progress on a skill over time compared to their similar (e.g., ELL, Intervention Group, Grade Level) peers

Systematic: Instruction that is based on a sequence of skills progressing from simple to complex and based on the logical order of language development



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