Characteristics of Dyslexia

Observation of performance

Characteristics of Dyslexia

• Difficulty saying the alphabet correctly in sequence
• Difficulty forming the shapes of the letters
• Difficulty writing the alphabet correctly in sequence
• Errors in naming letters
• Reversals of orientation of letters or sequence of letters in words when read or written (e.g., b/d, was/saw, quiet/quite)
• Difficulty in learning and remembering printed words
• Repeated spelling errors
• Difficulty in handwriting
• Slow rate of writing
• Difficulty with reading comprehension

Characteristics which may be associated with dyslexia

• Delay in spoken language
• Difficulty pronouncing words with sounds in the right order
• Difficulty finding the “right” word
• Late establishing preferred writing handedness
• Late learning right, left, and other directionality components
• Problems learning concept of time and temporal sequencing
• Family history of similar problems

Other Factors to Consider

Trends and Tendencies

• Grades slip downward year-to-year
• Inconsistent grades from day-to-day
• Inconsistent performance on standardized tests
• Confusion with math symbols, but not computation
• Math computation is better than word problems
• Memorized spelling is better than spontaneous spelling
• Homework is better quality than classwork
• Inordinate time spent on homework
• Deteriorated organization and study habits
• Deteriorating motivation and self-esteem
• Good grades, but too much struggle is evident
• Chooses oral performance over written when given chance
• Compensation by use of pictures, prompt from teacher, etc.
• Stress reflected by irregular writing and uneven pencil pressure

Frequent, Common or typical behaviors

• Short attention span
• Posture indicative of poor self-esteem
• Anxiety results in inappropriate behaviors
• Withdrawal
• Inordinate stress during performance times
• Cheating
• Overcompensation through pseudo-confidence
• Poor motivation resulting from lack of success
• Situational behaviors manifested in specific situations (child/teacher conflict) though not characteristic of student’s general behavior

These students may exhibit intellectual ability, mechanical ability, and talent in non-academic areas, social skills, and other strengths.
What Can a Parent Do to Help a Child with Dyslexia?

Help your child understand the nature of his/her difficulty:
- Read books or view videos about dyslexia.
- Emphasize the child’s abilities instead of “disabilities.”

Help other members of the family:
- Help others recognize and understand your child’s learning disability. Family members often ask “who, what, where, and when” questions to get the necessary information.

Help your child locate and develop other talents:
- Sports, art, music, mechanics, hobbies, etc.

Help improve your child’s self-image by giving your child tasks he/she can master:
- Give the child chores to do (e.g., setting the table for supper, clearing the dishes, and making the beds).
- Make short lists of tasks to help the child remember. A list is impersonal and reduces irritations. The child will gain satisfaction as he checks off tasks completed.
- Often children do not process multiple requests quickly or accurately. State your ideas in simple, clear, one-concept commands and ask the child to repeat what was said. Speaking at a slower rate of speed to the child is often helpful.

Structure the child’s life at home:
- Stick to a regular routine for meals, play, TV, chores, bedtime, etc.
- Keep belongings in the same place. Help the child remember where to put them.
- Keep instructions simple—one at a time.
- Break tasks into small parts or steps.
- Relieve stress in weak areas.
- Guard against negative remarks, especially those referring to laziness or lack of effort.
- Avoid threats of punishment for such things as low grades, their need for repetition of directions, ineptness at simple tasks, etc.
- Set standards, goals, and expectations of achievement within reach of your child’s abilities.

If parents can accept their child’s assets and liabilities, the child can then begin to accept himself/herself.
How Can Parents Build Self-Esteem?

- Praise your child often and sincerely.
- Don’t constantly nag or criticize.
- Catch your child doing well.
- Give your child opportunities to succeed.
- Tell your child you believe in him or her.
- Give your child lots of hugs and kisses.
- Praise efforts that are working towards a goal.
- Don’t compare your child with anyone else.
- Look for ways to make your child feel capable.
- Encourage your child to make age appropriate decisions.
- Give your child a chance to solve problems before jumping in.
- Listen to your child’s thoughts, feelings, and ideas without judging or criticizing.

What Suggestions Can be Made for the Classroom Teacher?

Help build the student’s self-image.

Stress verbal participation:
- Reduce reading aloud and grade oral work in addition to written.
- Decrease the amount of written work in favor of oral.
- Call on student to read aloud only when he/she volunteers.
- Ask student to listen to information and report orally on a specific topic.

Communicate with the child.

Make directions simple and brief:
- Refrain from long verbal explanations.
- Question student briefly to make sure he/she understands. Ask student to give you an example to confirm his/her understanding.
- Give examples, demonstrate.
- Encourage student to ask questions and treat each question patiently.

Break assignments into steps. Model assignments and talk about what you are doing while you model:
- Have someone write out student’s assignments.
- Help student organize and get started.
- Help student schedule long assignments.

Make special accommodations when needed:
- Provide memory aids.
- Provide visual reminders or examples.
- Allow student to record lectures and test reviews.
- Provide audio books of content area textbooks, or appropriately leveled readers.
- Allow sub-vocalizing. Repeat sounds while spelling.
What Strengths Are We Likely to See in Individuals with Dyslexia?

- Highly creative
- Links previously unrelated ideas, processes
- Finds new ways to do old things
- Problem solver
- Inventor
- Builder
- Diplomat
- Good sense of humor
- Likes and enjoys helping people
- May anticipate people’s emotions
- Excels at individual sports
- Works better alone than with team
- Understands animals, plants, living things
- Mechanically inclined
- Wants to know how things work
- Likes to repair or make things better
- Enjoys working with hands
- Likes building things
- Scientific thinker
- Very curious and observant
- A good motivator
- Has high energy
- Enthusiastic
- Is open-minded
Are There Laws to Protect a Child with Dyslexia?

Federal Laws

Several federal laws pertain to the education of children with dyslexia. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that, "...no otherwise qualified individual with disabilities in the United States shall solely by reason of his/her disability be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program of activity receiving federal financial assistance." Most public schools are covered under this law because they receive federal funds, and dyslexia has been determined to be a disability as defined by law.

The IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is designed to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education. This emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs.

Texas State Laws

In addition to these federal laws, the Texas Legislature has enacted several laws under the Texas Education Code requiring a school district to implement programs for the screening and treatment of dyslexia and related disorders. Compliance, enforcement, and funding for those laws are an ongoing issue. The TEA has determined that an instructional program for dyslexic students must be individualized, multi-sensory, and with intensive phonics and synthetic phonics. The Texas Education Agency and Texas Education Code 38.003 can be found at http://www.tea.state.tx.us.
Audio Books

Probably the most important accommodation that can be encouraged and provided to middle-school and high school students is access to textbook and literature through audio books. Bookshare.org and Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) are the primary resources for audio textbooks when audio books are not provided by textbook publishers. Many operating systems have free screen reader features. Digital recording playback devices or software must initially be purchased by each student, but is a worthwhile investment considering the access to text materials and time saving benefits for the student. An additional resource for audio books of literature would be to purchase a membership with audible.com.

Membership Information for Parents

Bookshare.org:
Bookshare™ provides the world’s largest online library of accessible reading materials for people with print disabilities. Individuals can sign up for membership and access the library on their own. Organizations that serve individuals with print disabilities (schools, libraries, community centers, etc.) can sign up and provide access to their students or clients.

A Bookshare membership offers unlimited access to accessible books, textbooks, newspapers and magazines. Additionally, free access technology makes it easy to read books with a computer.

Through an award from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Bookshare offers free memberships to U.S. schools and qualifying U.S. students.

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic:
Register online at rfbd.org.

As an involved parent, you want to ensure every opportunity for your child’s educational success.

If your child has a documented disability that limits or prevents his/her ability to read standard print effectively, he/she is eligible to become a registered RFB&D member. This includes children with visual impairments, learning disabilities (dyslexia), or other physical disabilities. Students with learning disabilities who listen to recorded titles while following along with the book show greater educational success and feel better about themselves because they can keep pace with their peers.

Registering your child as an individual member allows him/her access to RFB&D’s extensive library of digitally recorded audio book titles. Even if your child’s school has its own Learning Through Listening Institutional Membership, an individual membership would enable your child to have the freedom to pursue independent or supplemental reading.

Your registered child would also have unlimited access to RFB&D’s reference librarian service and the option to request books not in our current collection. Having an individual membership means that your child can order audio textbooks and have them shipped directly to your home. In addition, your child can continue to reap the benefits of an individual membership throughout his/her entire educational and professional career.

It’s easy to register with RFB&D. Because it’s a nonprofit organization, they charge a nominal membership fee to help defray the costs of producing a unique service to as many eligible people as possible.

In order to play RFB&D audio books, you will need to use specially adapted CD players or software. RFB&D offers a complete line of players, software, and accessories for nonprofit sale. Click on the “Players and Accessories” button above and to the left for more information.*

Becoming an individual member is easy!
1. Register online or complete the Individual Membership Application.
2. Obtain a signature from a qualified professional in the field of disability services, education, medicine, or psychology and send in the completed certification form. The certifier must be a recognized expert who attests to the physical basis of the visual, perceptual, or other physical disability, which limits the applicant's use of standard print. (Appropriate certifying experts may differ from disability to disability.)

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Return all completed parts of the application to:

Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic
Attn: Member Services
20 Roszel Road
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

Register online at rfbd.org or download an application.

If you would prefer to receive an application by mail, please contact Member Services toll-free at: 800-221-4792.
Suggested Reading List on Learning and Learning Differences, Especially Dyslexia

Visit the Region XIII Dyslexia Lending Library at www.esc13.net/dyslexia/library or call (512)919-5448 with questions regarding the Dyslexia Lending Library.

*Overcoming Dyslexia*
Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

*About Dyslexia: Unraveling the Myth and Smart Kids with School Problems: Things to Know and Ways to Help*
Priscilla Vail

*All Kinds of Minds: A Young Student’s Book about Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders.*
Melvin Levin, M.D.

*Keeping a Head in School: A Student’s Book about Learning Abilities and Learning Disorders.*
Melvin Levine, M.D.

*The Dyslexic Scholar: Helping Your Child Succeed in the School System*
Kathleen Nosek.

*To Read or Not to Read*
Daphne Hurford

*What’s Wrong With Me?: Learning Disabilities at Home and School*
Regina Cicci

*No One to Play With: The Social Side of Learning Disabilities*
Osman and Blinder

*Bridges to Reading: What to Do When You Suspect Your Child has a Reading Problem.*

*A Manual for Parents of Children with Dyslexia.*
Published by AABIDA (512) 452-7658

*The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders*

*Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills.*
Edited by Judith R Birsh. Paul Brookes Publishing Co. 1-800-638-3775

*Straight Talk About Reading*
Susan Hall and Louisa Moats