Dyslexia: Early Intervention
Kelly English, MA ABA
Early Communication & Certified Dyslexia Specialist

Dyslexia is:
A language-processing disorder that also impacts directionality and the ability to memorize random facts. Dyslexia is inherited. Warning signs of Dyslexia start to appear as early as age 1.

National Institutes of Health’s research-based definition:
Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological 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.

Phonemic Awareness:
The ability to identify and manipulate sounds in a one syllable word IN YOUR HEAD.

7 Essential Phonemic Awareness Skills:
Segmentation: Count or say each sound:
What sounds do you hear in the word HIT?
What is the last sound in the word TAP?
How many sounds do you hear in the word CAT?

Phoneme Addition: Add a sound:
If you took /sa/ and added /m/, what word would you have?

Phoneme Deletion: Delete a sound:
What word would be left if /k/ were taken away from CAT?

Phoneme Substitution: Change a sound:
What word would you have if you change the /h/ in HOT to /p/?

Phoneme Matching: Compare 2 words:
Do PEN and PIPE start with the same sound?

Blending:
What word would you have if you put/ran these sounds together: /s/ /a/ /t/?

Rhyming:
Create words that rhyme
Tell me as many words as you can that rhyme with EAT.
Typical Spelling & Reading Mistakes:
- Shape
- Sequence
- Omit or Insert
- Directionality
- Silent - E
- Sight Words
- Ignore Suffixes
- Semantic Substitutions
- Ignore or Change Function Words
- Guess

Dyslexia is often called:
- Reading Disability
- Learning Disability, “LD”
- Specific Language Disability, “SLD”
- Auditory Discrimination
- Phonemic Awareness Deficit
- Orthographic Deficit
- Visual Tracking Problem
- Visual Processing Disorder
- Written language Disorder
- Visual Motor Integration
- Dysnomia or Fluency or Word Retrieval
- Word Blind or Word Blindness

Strengths:
- Art
- Athletics
- Music
- People Skills, very sensitive
- Highly Intuitive
- Mechanical Skill, good logic
- 3-D Visualization
- Extremely curious - The “WHY” kids.
- Creative, global thinkers
Brain & Genetic Research on Dyslexia

Harvard Studies (late 1970's)
- Hemisphere Difference
- Disorganized nerve pathways in the brain
- Ectopias

FMRI Studies (later 1990's)
- Dyslexia brain use
- Brain function after remediation with Orton-Gillingham

Genes
- 3 identified - someone might have 1, 2 or all 3 genetic differences
- Chromosome 6: controls phonemic awareness
- Chromosome 15: controls rapid naming
- Chromosome 1: controls visual memory for words

Dyslexia is highly heritable:
- If one parent has it - 50% of the children will as well
- If both parents have it, no less than 50% as a flip of the coin

Orton-Gillingham... What is it?
- Simultaneously multisensory
- Systematic
- Explicit
- Intense practice
- Weaving

What WON'T work...
- Hooked on Phonics
- Reading Recovery
- Read Naturally
- Accelerated Reader
- Vision Therapy
- Brain Gym or other ND exercises
- Sylvan, Score or Kuman Centers
- Fast ForWord
- Colored Lenses or Overlays
- Special Diets or Medicines
Warning Signs for Dyslexia

If a child has 3 or more of the following warning signs, the parents and teachers are encouraged to learn more about Dyslexia

A Preschooler
(signs will show as early as 12 months old)
- Delayed speech
- Chronic ear infections
- Severe reactions to childhood illnesses
- Mixing up the sounds & syllables in long words
- Constant confusion of left versus right
- Late to establish a dominant hand
- Difficulty learning to tie shoes
- Trouble memorizing their address, phone and/or the alphabet
- Can’t create words that rhyme
- A close relative with Dyslexia

An Elementary School Child
- Letters and number reversals continuing past the end of first grade
- Dysgraphia: slow, non-automatic handwriting that is difficult to read
- Extreme difficulty learning cursive
- Slow, choppy, inaccurate reading:
  - Guesses based in shape or context
  - Skips or misreads prepositions (at, to, of)
  - Ignores suffixes
  - Can’t “sound out” unknown words
- Terrible spelling
- Often can’t remember sight words (they, were, does) or homonyms (their, they’re and there)
- Difficulty telling time o a clock with hands
- Trouble with math: memorizing multiplication tables, sequencing steps, directionality
- When speaking, difficulty finding correct words...
  - “thingy”, “whachamacallit”, etc.
- Articulation difficulties
- Extremely messy bedroom, backpack, desk
- Dreads going to school

A High School Student
- Symptoms from previous categories PLUS:
  - Limited vocabulary
  - Extremely poor written expression
  - Large discrepancy between verbal skills and written compositions
  - Unable to master a foreign language
  - Difficulty reading printed music
  - Poor grades in many classes
  - May drop out of high school

An Adult
- Education history similar to above PLUS:
  - Slow reader
  - May have to read a page 2 or 3 times to understand it
  - Terrible speller
  - Difficulty putting thoughts onto paper
  - Dreads writing memos or letters
  - Still has difficulty with right versus left
  - Sometimes confuses b and d, especially when tired, stressed or sick

Visit these sites to Learn more:
www.Hands4Learning.com
www.BrightSolutions.US
www.interdys.org
www.nih.gov
Warning Signs of ADD/ADHD

If a child frequently displays MANY of these symptoms, their behavior is age and situation-inappropriate, and it is interfering with the child’s ability to be successful in school, the parents are encouraged to learn more. (Over 40% of individuals with Dyslexia also experience ADD/ADHD)

Physical Activity:
Either:
- Can’t sit still, feels restless
- Has boundless energy
- Fidgeting, restless feet, etc.
Or: Couch potato, lethargic, slow, space cadet
- Physically there - mentally gone

Frequent mood swings:
- Feels emotions intensely
  - Higher Highs & Lower Lows
- Low tolerance for frustration
  - May have rage attacks

Attention:
- Trouble deciding what to pay attention to
  - What’s most important
- Trouble getting started on task
  - Often feels overwhelmed
- Trouble staying focused on repetitive tasks
  - Until the task is complete
  - Can’t do homework independently
- Trouble shifting attention to a new task

Highly Distractible:
- Distracted by any change in environment
  - Any noise, movement or smell
- Also distracted by their own thoughts
  - Daydreamer
- Can’t stay focused for long
  - Except Nintendo-type games or TV
  - Or a new or scary activity
- May hyperfocus on a hobby
- Starts many projects
  - But rarely finishes them

Disorganized:
- Messy room, desk, backpack
- Constantly loses or misplaces things

Doesn’t Listen Well:
- Confused by multi-step oral directions

Impulsive:
- Can’t wait to be called on
  - Blurs our answer in class
- Extremely impatient
  - Difficult to wait for his/her turn
- Often acts before thinking
  - Doesn’t seem to learn from mistakes

No Tolerance for Boredom:
- May start an argument of things are too calm

Time Management:
- Always rushing; can’t slow down
- Makes careless mistakes
  - Hates to double-check
- Doesn’t use class time well
  - Feels rushed by teachers & parents
- Puts most things off until the last minute

Odd Sleep Cycles:
- Night Owl, hates to go to bed
- Difficult to wake up in the morning
- May be restless sleeper
- Bedwetting or sleepwalking

Inconsistent Performance:
- Good days & Bad days
  - Some days they can do the schoolwork
  - Other days they can’t

Other Symptoms:
- Chatterbox, talks excessively
- Interrupts conversations frequently
- Strong sense of justice, bossy
- Lots of allergies
- Trouble remembering daily routines
- Relative with ADD