

## Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention

### What is Dyslexia?

“Dyslexia 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.”

Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, November 12, 2002.  
This definition is also used by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).



“As parents and advocates of children with dyslexia, we have seen firsthand that early intervention has brought success to children.”

— Pam Cook, Diane Reott, and Daphne Uliana  
Parent Advisory Committee Members  
Pennsylvania Pilot Project

### Facts About Reading and Dyslexia

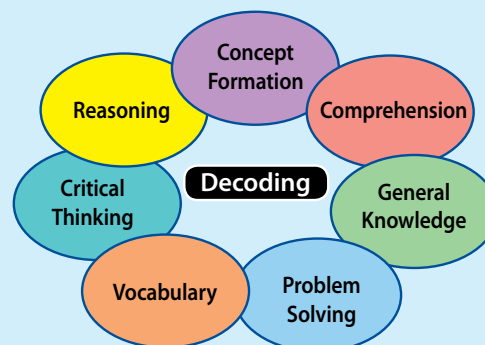
- Human brains are naturally wired to speak and listen, but are not naturally wired to read and write. Written language must be taught.
- The single most important birth to preschool activity for building skills essential for reading success is reading aloud to children.
- A child’s ability to recognize and name the upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet in kindergarten is the single best predictor of reading success.
- Kindergarten programs should be designed so that all children will develop the prerequisite phonological, vocabulary, and early reading skills necessary for success in the first grade.
- Systematic and explicit phonics instruction is most effective when introduced early (kindergarten and 1st grade).
- The development of strong reading skills is the foundational academic ability required for all learning in school and throughout adult life.
- About 85 percent of students with learning disabilities have a primary learning disability in reading. As many as 15 to 20 percent of the population as a whole have some of the symptoms of dyslexia and can benefit from systematic, explicit instruction in reading, writing, and language.
- Dyslexia is a continuum disorder. Severity varies from mild to severe, and from poor spelling to total inability to read.

- Dyslexia occurs in people of all backgrounds and intellectual levels, and often runs in families.
- Accommodations in the classroom (e.g., extra time, assistive technology) can make the difference between academic success and academic failure.
- Children with dyslexia may benefit from the use of audio-books, which would allow them to keep up with grade-level vocabulary and content, and read the same books their friends are reading for pleasure.

### The Good News about Early Literacy Intervention

- We can, using tests currently available, identify students who are likely to struggle with reading, starting in preschool or kindergarten.

### Sea of Strengths Model of Dyslexia





- Appropriate assessments enable teachers to recognize early signs that a child may be at risk for dyslexia or other learning disabilities. These assessments permit teachers to target instruction to meet individual student's needs.
- If children are at risk, we can address it with 30 minutes of intervention a day. By the time the children are 8 or 9 years of age, it takes at least 2 hours a day of special training. **The key is finding those at risk early.**
- Effective early reading instruction creates a positive feeling of self-esteem as children experience success.
- Most academic problems can be avoided if children have learned to read by third grade, so they can then read to learn in third grade and beyond.

## Words of Advice From Parents to Parents

***As parents of children with dyslexia, we have seen firsthand that early intervention has brought success to our children.***

Our children could not learn how to read, and we didn't know if they would ever learn how to read. We hear from parents every day that their children enter kindergarten and 1st grade happy and ready to learn, but by the age of 6 and 7 they are depressed, feel stupid and inadequate, blaming themselves for not having the ability to learn how to read.

We experienced this with our children as we watched their self-esteem decline, but with good intervention our children are reading, happy, and in a good place in their lives despite their disabilities.

We believe it is critical that all children are provided with early and intensive reading instruction so they can achieve grade level success. But, more importantly, it's about giving them all a chance to define themselves by their strengths and not their weaknesses.

Daphne Uliana and Diane Reott  
Co-Founders  
PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition

## The Bad News about "Waiting to Fail"

- Reading difficulties are the most common cause of academic failure and underachievement.
- Children who fall behind at an early age (K and grade 1) fall further and further behind over time. Longitudinal studies show that of the children who are diagnosed with a reading disability in third grade, 74 percent continue to have a reading disability in ninth grade.
- The inability to read affects children socially and makes them "feel different" from their peers when they must read slowly and laboriously in class on a daily basis.
- When children have difficulty with reading and, as a result, all academic learning, they may find problem behavior an effective means of escaping or avoiding reading activities.

## Family Literacy Resources

PA Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (PBIDA)  
[www.pbida.org/](http://www.pbida.org/)

International Dyslexia Association  
<https://dyslexiaida.org>

IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know  
<https://dyslexiaida.org/ida-dyslexia-handbook>

Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity  
<http://www.dyslexia.yale.edu>

Understood  
[www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)  
Click "Reading Assist" – bottom left – to see and hear information.

Reading Rockets  
[www.readingrockets.org/atoz](http://www.readingrockets.org/atoz)

American Academy of Pediatrics Early Literacy Toolkit  
<http://littoolkit.aap.org/Pages/home.aspx>

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) Dyslexia Pilot Project  
[www.pattan.net/category/Projects/page/Dyslexia.html](http://www.pattan.net/category/Projects/page/Dyslexia.html)

For links to references and information cited in this brochure, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/hzt9k55>