

Could Your Child's Reading Struggles Be Dyslexia?

(NAPSA)—It happens every year: A parent is called by her young child's teacher. "Your daughter is not keeping up in class and her reading is behind that of her peers. She takes much longer to do her work, and her writing is sloppy. You need to work with her more at home."

The parent feels perplexed and anxious because she has already been working with her daughter for hours each night. She tells her she must apply herself more and stop goofing off. Later on, she wonders if that was the right thing to say.

As many as one in five children are affected by dyslexia—the No. 1 reason for reading struggles. It's also the most common learning disability and accounts for many school dropouts. How do you know if your child has dyslexia? Read on.

What Challenge Does Dyslexia Pose To Children?

Dyslexia is a brain-based language disability. MRI brain scans show that people who have dyslexia use a different part of their brain when reading, which makes processing print much harder. You'll notice this difficulty not only in their reading but also in their spelling. Sometimes, people with dyslexia will struggle with processing spoken language as well.

All these factors may affect a child's self-esteem due to loss of confidence. They may believe they are not as smart as their peers. That's ironic, because in actuality, many kids with dyslexia are bright and gifted—their learning difference has nothing to do with intelligence or IQ.

How Can I Have My Child Tested?

You'll want to look for a reputable child psychologist, educational psychologist or neuropsychologist who specifically evaluates for dyslexia. The in-depth evaluation will take several hours and give you a detailed outline of your child's areas of strengths and weaknesses. Most also list recommendations on reading methods and accommodations that may help your specific child. Unfortunately, most public schools do not specifically evaluate for dyslexia, although they will look for the broader category of a "specific learning disability."

How Can Educators Help?

General and special education



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teachers are encouraged to learn everything they can about dyslexia. Sign up for professional development courses that discuss evidence-based reading methodologies to help children who have dyslexia, such as the Orton-Gillingham method. The nonprofit organization Learning Ally offers a host of professional development opportunities for teachers, both in person as well as online. A teacher grounded in knowledge about dyslexia can be a hero and a game changer for a child who feels so very different.

Is Anything Being Done To Catch Dyslexia Early?

Research shows that early identification and intervention is the key to helping a child with dyslexia learn to read. State by state, laws are being passed nationwide calling for early screening of children—since dyslexia can be identified as early as age 5½. Most laws support screening children in kindergarten or 1st grade, and then placing them in an explicit, multisensory reading program for phonemic awareness to help those with dyslexia. There is also a new bipartisan Dyslexia Caucus in the U.S. Congress that many families hope will be influential in the near future.

Even with such reading programs in place, it is important to remember that dyslexia is a life-long learning difference. It is not outgrown and there is no "cure." Proper interventions and accommodations are very important.

Where Can I Turn For Help?

Learning Ally is a national nonprofit that helps students in kindergarten through graduate school who have print disabilities like dyslexia. The organization offers free parent consultations, webinars and teacher support. Find out more by visiting www.LearningAlly.org or call 800-221-4792.