

Dyslexia

What Families Need to Know

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a language processing disorder which can hinder reading, writing, spelling, and sometimes even speaking. Children and adults with dyslexia have a neurological disorder that causes their brains to process and interpret information differently. Dyslexia occurs among people of all economic and ethnic backgrounds. Often, more than one member of a family has dyslexia. According to the National Institute of Child and Human Development, as many as 15 percent of Americans struggle with reading. Therefore, it is important to identify and diagnosis characteristics of dyslexia as early as possible.

What causes dyslexia?

The exact cause of dyslexia is not certain but here are the various theories:

Brain Development- Some researchers believe that dyslexia is the result of improper neuronal migration. Neurons, nerve cells that form the brain, develop away from where they actually need to be. This failure to migrate causes the brain to not develop fully.

Early Age Hearing Problems- Other researchers believe that if there is a problem with hearing at an early age a child will not be able to hear correctly how letters are supposed to sound causing the brain (which is at a crucial developing stage) to fail to make the connections between letters and their correct sound. This lack of letter recognition can be a life long struggle.

Crossed Wiring- There are studies that suggest a child with dyslexia will use the right side of his/her brain for language work where a child without dyslexia will use the left side. The right side of the brain is not the side that is made to comprehend language, suggesting that somewhere those wires got crossed. This dependence on the right side of the brain makes a person with dyslexia have to work twice as hard to comprehend language.

Genetic- Some believe that dyslexia is inherited through genetics. If a person has dyslexia then chances are their parents, grandparents, or aunts etc. have dyslexia.

A Combination- The majority of people believe it is or it can be a combination of all of the above reasons.

Knowing the cause of dyslexia is not essential to understanding how to deal with it.



What are the signs of dyslexia?

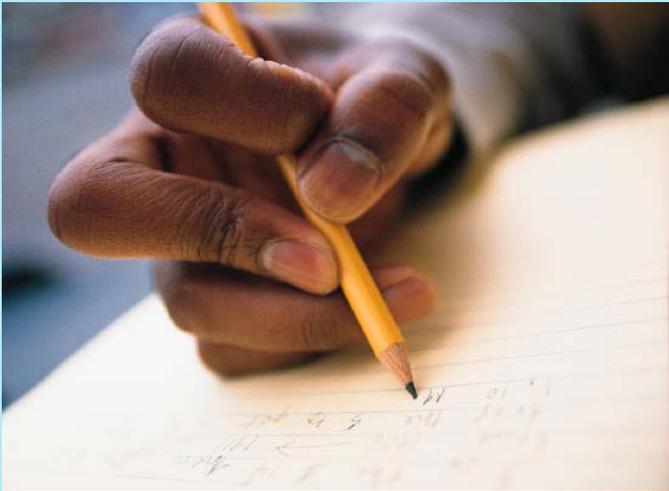
The problems displayed by individuals with dyslexia involve difficulties in acquiring and using written language. It is a myth that individuals with dyslexia “read backwards,” although spelling can look quite jumbled at times because students have trouble remembering letter symbols for sounds and forming memories for words. Other problems experienced by individuals with dyslexia include the following:

Preschool children may:

- Have delayed speech development
- Have difficulty pronouncing words
- May have a limited vocabulary
- Be unable to find and recall the right word; creatively formulate substitute words ("rollerchair" for "wheelchair")
- Have difficulty with rhyming
- Have trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, colors or shapes
- Have trouble learning how to write his or her name
- Be unable to follow multistep directions or routines
- Have difficulty telling and/or retelling a story in the correct sequence

Kindergarten through fourth grade children may:

- Have difficulty separating sounds in words and blending sounds to make words (decoding and encoding)
- Have a hard time learning the connection between letters and their sounds
- Confuse small words or letters while reading--at/to/the, said/and, does/goes, was/saw, left/felt, b/d/p
- May read a word once and then not recognize it in subsequent appearances within the same passage
- Have halting and frustrating oral reading fluency; make consistent reading and spelling errors or word omissions
- Have trouble remembering math facts, understanding multi-step math concepts and word problems
- Experience great frustration when attempting new skills
- Rely heavily on memorizing without understanding
- Be impulsive and prone to accidents
- Have difficulty planning
- Use an awkward pencil grip
- Have trouble learning to tell time; and concepts of before and after as they relate to telling time
- Have extremely creative and gifted talents in other areas
- Avoid reading out loud or for pleasure
- Show anxiety; avoiding school or testing



How is dyslexia diagnosed?

Dyslexia is diagnosed using a complete evaluation including intelligence, educational, and speech/language assessments. The assessments used in diagnosing dyslexia should also include observations, input from teachers and parents, analysis of student work, and developmental and social histories. During the assessment process, examiners look for evidence of the disorder and also rule out other factors that could be causing the student's reading and language problems. Factors to rule out include, lack of instruction, lack of attendance, social and economic factors, and physical problems such as hearing or vision difficulty.

What are the effects of dyslexia?

The impact of dyslexia for each person depends on the severity of the condition and the approach to remediation. The most common effects are problems with reading, spelling, and writing. Some individuals with dyslexia do not have much difficulty with early reading and spelling tasks, but do experience problems when more complex language skills are required, such as using correct grammar, understanding textbook material, and writing essays.

People with dyslexia can also have problems with spoken language. They may find it difficult to express themselves clearly, or to fully comprehend what others mean when they speak. Such language problems are often difficult to recognize, but they can lead to major problems in school, in the workplace, and in relating to other people.

Dyslexia can also affect a person's self-image and self esteem. Individuals with dyslexia often end up feeling less capable than they actually are. After experiencing a great deal of stress due to academic problems, a student may become discouraged about continuing in school.

What to do if your child has dyslexia?

- Build a support team. Having a support system is one of the most important steps you can make towards helping your child succeed in life. Your child's support team could consist of you, his/her teachers, coaches, friends, relatives, etc.
- Teach your child to be honest about his/her disability. Provide your child with an uncomplicated explanation of his/her disability that he/she can use when encountering new people and situations. For instance, teach him/her to say, "I have a learning disability. That means I need extra help with reading and spelling." This will help others better understand and aid him/her. Remember, children with dyslexia are not unintelligent; they simply need help in specific areas.
- Work closely with your child's teachers, administrators and the IEP (Individualized Education Program). You are your child's best advocate. Keeping the lines of communication open with your school is the best way to help him/her in this area.
- Teach your child to use his/her best method of learning or expressing himself/herself, whether that method is visual, auditory or tactile. If your child learns better by listening, he/she can use a tape recorder to gather information, or he/she can try talking about a subject with a knowledgeable friend rather than reading a book about it. Books on tape are useful tools for many children with dyslexia.
- Help your child set reasonable goals and break those goals into small steps. Help your child make goals that are specific, realistic and optimistic. If you suspect that the goal is too difficult (or too easy) for your child to achieve, gently guide him/her to a more reasonable outcome. For instance, instead of "I will get straight As in English this year," help him/her redefine the goal: "I will raise my grade in English by the end of the second semester." Then, help him/her create a plan for meeting that goal.
- Help your child stay organized. Using color coding or wall charts will help your child keep his/her goals and schedule on target. For instance, make a chart and post basketball games in green, swim meets in red, scouts in blue, etc. Using color makes the process of organizing more visual and less word-dependent for the dyslexic child. Use both color and words.
- Help him/her find a place where he/she can experience success. Swimming, singing, running, arts, music, are all alternative areas in which your child can succeed. Volunteer work is also a great way for your child to help others and feel good about himself.
- Believe in your child's abilities and maintain a positive outlook. Let your child know that no matter what, you will be there for him/her with love and support.



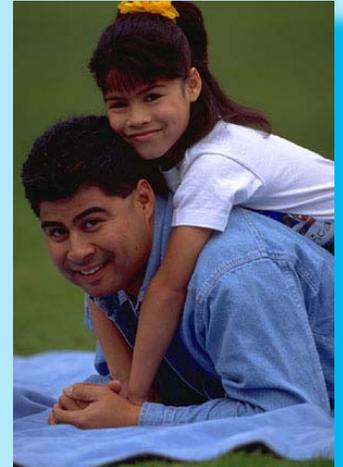
Child Find in Kansas

Child find is an ongoing process that school staff use in public and private schools to locate and identify students who may need special education services. In Kansas, “child find” for young children ages birth through age 5 is called “screening.” Schools should provide screenings for children within 30 days of the request for a screening. Screenings may consist of observations, interviews, and assessments that would identify a disability or developmental delay in the areas of communication, thinking/reasoning development, social-emotional development, self-help/adaptive behavior, and/or physical development.

For children in kindergarten through 12th grade, child find usually begins with general education interventions. When it is determined that a child needs support in addition to what the classroom teacher has provided, a team meeting is held and an intervention plan is developed. This team will use an individual problem-solving process known as general education interventions. The team is sometimes called a student support team, student improvement team, care team, or something similar.

The purpose of this team is to determine:

- which skills need further intervention,
- what interventions will be provided,
- how and by whom the intervention will be carried out,
- what data will be collected to determine if the intervention is working, and
- how often the team will meet to review the progress of the child.



As part of their school improvement efforts, some schools in Kansas have implemented the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). In those schools, a framework of academic and/or behavioral interventions is developed and interventions are provided to any student who shows a need based on instructional data. Documentation from the interventions can be used to develop effective instructional strategies to meet specific needs of students in the general education environment.

For more information about the Kansas MTSS, see *A Family Guide to a Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)* at <http://www.kpirc.org/uploads/MTSSKS1.pdf>

If the general education interventions are significant, beyond what could be provided by the general education and requires specially designed instruction, the team would refer the student for an initial evaluation for consideration of special education services.

Resources



Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC)
1-866-711-6711
www.kpirc.org

The International Dyslexia Association
40 York Rd., 4th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21204
(410) 296-0232
www.interdys.org



Families Together, Inc.
1-888-815-6364
www.familiestogetherinc.org

The Kansas/Missouri Branch of the International Dyslexia Association
430 E. Blue Ridge Blvd.
Kansas City, MO 64145
www.ksmolda.org

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)
1-800-203-9462
www.ksde.org

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