

## **Southeast Polk Community School District**

### **Dyslexia - Facts and Tips**

Dyslexia is a condition that has received a great deal of attention both inside and outside of the educational community. Key aspects of dyslexia are described below. A number of links are also provided which contain additional information.

#### **Definitions of Dyslexia:**

Iowa's Definition: Dyslexia is defined in Iowa code as being 'a specific and significant impairment in the development of reading, including but not limited to phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension that is not solely accounted for by intellectual disability, sensory disability or impairment or lack of appropriate instruction.

International Dyslexia Association 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.

#### **Approach to Educating Students Who Have Dyslexia:**

*Parents often ask, "What type of instruction does my child with dyslexia need in order to learn to read?" Almost ALL children with dyslexia can be taught to read if they are given specific, comprehensive, and intensive instruction. This structured approach to reading should be delivered by a highly trained teacher.*

*A highly knowledgeable and skilled teacher of reading, NOT a curriculum, teaches a child to read.*

*Instruction for individuals with reading and related learning disabilities should be:*

- *Explicit- component skills for reading, spelling, and writing are explained, directly taught, and modeled by the teacher. Children are discouraged from guessing at words.*
- *Systematic and cumulative- has a definite, logical sequence of concept introduction;*

*concepts are ordered from simple to more complex; each new concept builds upon previously introduced concepts, with built in review to aid memory and retrieval.*

- *Structured- has step-by-step procedures for introducing, reviewing, and practicing concepts.*

*Instruction that is supported by research is explicit, systematic, and cumulative. In other words, there is a plan; the instruction is structured.*

*This evidence-based approach integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing. That is, the instruction incorporates all aspects of literacy.*

*This instruction embodies and defines Structured Literacy. Structured Literacy emphasizes the structure of language, including the speech sound system (phonology), the writing system (orthography), the structure of sentences (syntax), the meaningful parts of words (morphology) and the relationships among words (semantics), and the organization of spoken and written discourse. The integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing makes this instruction multisensory.*

*The ultimate goal of Structured Literacy is the development of deep levels of comprehension and expression and lifelong reading and writing habits. Although all aspects of this instruction are essential for students with dyslexia, this instruction also enhances the reading and academic achievement of all students.*

*Structured Literacy instruction is marked by several elements. The intensity and inclusion of these elements in instruction will vary according to student needs. Student needs are determined through continuous progress monitoring. Phonology - sound structure of spoken words Sound Symbol Association - mapping phonemes to printed letters Syllable Instruction - a syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. There are six basic syllable types Morphology - morphemes are the smallest unit of meaning in language Syntax Semantics*

### ***The History and Efficacy of Structured Literacy – How It Began and Why it Works***

*Dr. Orton and his colleagues began using multisensory techniques in the mid-1920's Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman based their original 1936 teaching manual for the "alphabetic method" on Dr. Orton's theories. The phrase "Orton-Gillingham approach" refers to the structures, sequential, multisensory techniques established by Dr. Orton, Ms. Gillingham, and their colleagues. Many programs today incorporate methods and principles first described in this foundational work, as well as other practices supported by research.*

(The above two sections were taken from - "IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know." International Dyslexia Association | ...until Everyone Can Read!, 2014, [dyslexiaida.org/ida-dyslexia-handbook/](http://dyslexiaida.org/ida-dyslexia-handbook/).)

## **Are Structured Literacy Programs Needed To Serve Students Who Have Dyslexia?**

A number of good, structured literacy programs are available and can be used to serve students who have dyslexia. These programs include: Orton Gillingham, Wilson, Spire, and Barton. Barton, Wilson and SPIRE are all based on methodology first pioneered by Orton Gillingham. While these structured literacy program can be helpful, districts do not need to have one of these programs to successfully teach a student with dyslexia.

### **How To Respond When Parents Request a Specific Methodology:**

Periodically, out of concern for their child, a parent may request a specific methodology be used to teach their child to read. In these situations it is important that we have detailed information on their child's reading ability and reading challenges. This may require assessing a student's reading skills and areas of strength and weakness. Once this information is obtained staff will then be in a position to address the specific instructional needs of the student. Information on progress, or lack of progress, the student is having in learning to read will be critical to these conversations.

After a review of all available information it may be determined that the student's instructional needs can be met through instruction provided by the classroom teacher. At other times the reading specialist may need to be involved. And at other times a referral to special education may be appropriate. In all cases the instruction provided must be explicit, systematic and cumulative, and structured.

### **Resources:**

[Iowa Reading Research Center](#)

[Dyslexia in the Classroom - What Every Teacher Needs to Know](#)

[International Dyslexia Association](#)

[Understood for Learning and Attention Issues](#)