



What is dyslexia?

“Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological 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.”

Adopted by the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002.

Dyslexia affects individuals throughout their lives; however, its impact can change at different stages in a person’s life. It is referred to as a learning disability because dyslexia can make it very difficult for a student to succeed academically. In its more severe forms, it may qualify a student for special education, special accommodations, or extra support services.

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 people with dyslexia **may** include the following:

- Learning to speak
- Learning letters and their sounds
- Organizing written and spoken language
- Memorizing number facts
- Reading quickly enough to comprehend
- Persisting with and comprehending longer reading assignments
- Spelling
- Learning a foreign language
- Correctly doing math operations

Not all students who have difficulties with these skills have dyslexia. Formal testing of reading, language, and writing skills is the only way to confirm a diagnosis of suspected dyslexia.

What are some myths and misconceptions about dyslexia?

- **Myth: Smart people cannot be dyslexic or have a learning disability.**
Fact: Dyslexia and intelligence are NOT connected. Many dyslexic individuals are very bright and creative and have accomplished amazing things as adults.
- **Myth: People with dyslexia cannot read so it is best to teach them to compensate.**
Fact: Most children and adults with dyslexia are able to read with appropriate (i.e., systematic, explicit, and research-based) intervention.
- **Myth: Children with dyslexia are just lazy. They should try harder.**
Fact: Dyslexic people show an abnormal pattern of brain function when reading. The findings provide evidence that people with dyslexia are not poorly taught, lazy, or stupid, but have an inborn brain difference that has nothing to do with intelligence. If students with dyslexia do not receive the right type of intervention and/or classroom accommodations, they often struggle in school -- despite being bright, motivated, and spending hours on homework assignments.
- **Myth: Any child who reverses letters or numbers has dyslexia.**
Fact: Up to a certain point, it is considered normal for children to reverse their letters and numbers, and is actually quite common. However, if this does not stop after two years of handwriting instruction, it becomes a red flag for dyslexia.
- **Myth: Retaining a child (i.e., holding them back a grade) will improve their academic struggles.**
Fact: According to several institutions (i.e., U.S. Department of Education, American Federation of Teachers, National Association of School Psychologists), there is no benefit to retention because it has never improved a student’s academic struggles. These students do not need another year of the same instruction -- they need differentiated intervention that is research-based, systematic, and explicit.

- **Myth: Dyslexia can be cured or helped by special balancing exercises, fish-oils, glasses with tinted lenses, vision exercises, NLP magical spelling, modeling clay letters, inner-ear-improving medications, training primitive reflexes, eye occlusion (patching), etc.**

Fact: None of these remedies have been found to be effective based on scientific evidence. Dyslexics require explicit and systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling patterns and rules. Additionally, they may need strategies for vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing, as well as verbal expression and word retrieval.

<http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/dyslexics/learn-about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/debunking-common-myths-about-dyslexia>

How does the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District address Dyslexia?

A student with Dyslexia typically has reading skills significantly below what is expected given the child's educational experience. Not all students who have difficulties with these skills are dyslexic. The KPBSD uses universal screening to benchmark all students' reading skills in grades K– 10 three times a year. When a student exhibits early signs of reading difficulty, the school gathers a team of professionals (i.e., teachers, parents, and other pertinent staff), who review the assessment data. At that time, the team constructs a plan of instructional supports to address the skill deficit while monitoring the student's progress over a period of time. Research has shown early interventions using effective reading strategies, such as explicit and systematic phonological instruction, can improve reading skills (S. Shaywitz, 2003). If a student makes adequate improvement in his/her reading skills given the appropriate targeted interventions, then additional supports and/or formal assessment may not be warranted. If a student does not demonstrate adequate progress, the school team, including the parent, may recommend intensifying instructional supports. At any time in the process, a formal evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services or a 504 plan may be initiated. Our educational teams are trained to make data-based decisions through the early years of your child's reading development. If you have specific questions concerning your child's reading progress/skills, contact his/her teacher.

How does the KPBSD assess Dyslexia?

Student suspected of having a specific learning disability in the area of reading in the KPBSD may be assessed using standardized tests in some or all of the following areas:

- Word Recognition
- Spelling
- Fluency
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Cognitive Ability
- Decoding
- Phonological Processing
- Reading Comprehension
- Oral Language Skills

These areas of evaluation coincide with the recommendations of the International Dyslexia Association.

Ways to help your child improve their literacy skills

- Read with your child daily.
- Read it again and again.
- Teach young children to listen for letter sounds (e.g., initial sound - pig & pin).
- Play rhyming and word games.
- Allow your child to make their own book choices (i.e., nonfiction, fantasy, comic book, etc.).
- Have books and magazines available for your child at home.
- Visit your local library.
- Always leave home with something to read.
- Encourage your child to keep a daily journal.
- Encourage your child to develop talents not related to reading to build self-confidence.
- Meet and talk to your child's teacher. Ask about how to find books at your child's level.
- Learn about reading difficulties and how to further support your child.

Further information can be found:

<http://dyslexia.yale.edu/>

<https://ak.dyslexiaida.org/>