Resources on Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities

Looking for ways to help children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities (LD) improve their reading skills? These resources offer information, advice and support.

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia refers to specific learning disabilities in reading. It is a language-based neurological disorder that causes the brain to process and interpret information differently.

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities** (NCLD) has a Dyslexia Toolkit for parents that describes common warning signs of dyslexia, steps to take if you think your child may have dyslexia and resources and tools needed to understand dyslexia. NCLD's 50 Questions about LD: An E-Book for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities provides answers to commonly asked questions.

The **International Dyslexia Association** provides a definition of dyslexia and a comprehensive set of answers to frequently asked questions as well as fact sheets on dyslexia and related learning disabilities.

The **Yale Center on Dyslexia & Creativity** provides myths and truths about dyslexia and numerous articles and books based on the Center's research.

COULD MY CHILD/STUDENT HAVE DYSLEXIA OR ANOTHER LD?

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities** lists potential signs of LD, organized by the child's age. Young children with dyslexia may have trouble:

- Recognizing letters, matching letters to sounds and blending sounds into speech
- Pronouncing words
- Learning and correctly using new vocabulary words
- Learning the alphabet, numbers, days of the week or similar common word sequences
- Rhyming

School-age children with dyslexia may have trouble:

- Mastering the rules of spelling
- Remembering facts and numbers
- Gripping a pencil or with handwriting
- Learning and understanding new skills (instead, relying heavily on memorization)
- Reading and spelling, such as reversing letters (d, b) or moving letters around (left, felt)
- Following a sequence of directions
- Completing word problems in math

NCLD also offers an Interactive LD Checklist, which serves as a guide to LD (not as a tool for determining specific LD).

Reading Rockets provides Target the Problem!, a tool to help parents and classroom teachers understand the specific problems a child may be having with reading.

Just because a child has these challenges doesn't mean that he or she is dyslexic. It's important to have a formal evaluation done to make the diagnosis.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK MY CHILD HAS DYSLEXIA OR LD?

Have your child evaluated as soon as possible. Comprehensive evaluations cover oral and written language, intellectual functioning, cognitive processing and educational achievement. The tests can be given at any age – and the younger the better.

The **Advocacy Institute** developed a sample letter parents can use to request an evaluation, available on the NCLD website.

Bright Solutions for Dyslexia offers information on testing for dyslexia, including when to test, how to test and who should do the testing.

The **International Dyslexia Association** provides a Testing & Evaluation Fact Sheet.

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities** provides guidance on the evaluation process:

- Information on testing for dyslexia
- *Four Important Steps to Take Before a Formal Evaluation*
- 10 Things You Need to Know about LD Evaluation
- How Do I Request an Evaluation? (video)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD/STUDENT HAS DYSLEXIA?

Follow up on the evaluation with appropriate supports, strategies and accommodations.

Children's Dyslexia Centers, Inc., operates more than 50 Centers in 13 states: CT, DE, IL, IN, MA, ME, MI, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT and WI. The Centers provide free, one-on-one tutoring twice a week after school to dyslexic children from early elementary through high school, regardless of their economic status. Instructors (school teachers who receive specialized training) use a sequential, multisensory, Orton-Gillingham-based approach. The Centers' tutor training program is accredited by the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC) and meets the International Dyslexia Association's knowledge and practice standards for teachers of reading.

Everyone Reading provides professional development, information, afterschool and summer tutoring programs, tools, workshops and referrals, research and advocacy on dyslexia and related learning disabilities. It began 40 years ago as a parent-organized effort, and it continues to feature parent support.

Eye to Eye operates a network of youth mentoring programs run by and for those with learning differences. It also operates camps for children with LD and ADHD.

GreatSchools helps parents solve education-related problems, raise expectations for their children's learning, develop education-related parenting skills, and access helpful resources online and in their community. Its online resources include The Individualized Education Program (IEP), Tips for a Successful IEP Meeting and Resolving Disagreements between Parents and Schools.

The **Grimes Reading Institute** provides research-based information, instruction and training in state-of-the-art reading practices for school administrators, teachers, parents, government agencies, professionals and para-professionals.

Literacy How provides a professional development, mentoring, modeling and coaching on a comprehensive, research-based model of literacy instruction to teachers and school administrators, with an emphasis on pre-K to third grade. Literacy How also offers comprehensive reading evaluations for struggling readers to help parents determine the best next steps for their child.

Reading Rockets provides guidance on finding and choosing a tutor for a struggling reader. It also posts videos including Empowering Parents, a PBS special hosted by Al Roker, that shows how families learn to identify early signs of reading problems and get their kids the help and support they need to succeed at reading.

Response-to-Intervention (RTI) is an approach to instruction and intervention that monitors students' progress frequently and adjusts interventions as needed, through general education, special education or both. The RTI approach helps with both identification of and intervention with learning disabilities, and it emphasizes early intervention rather than waiting until children fail.

- **The Advocacy Institute** offers a Parent's Guide to RTI that explains the tiered intervention model and provides sample intervention plans, checklists and worksheets.
- The **Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood** provides information and resources on the application of RTI in early childhood education.
- The **Recognition & Response** framework creates early childhood classrooms in which teachers administer periodic, universal screening for all children and research-based interventions and progress monitoring for individual children who show signs of learning difficulties.
- The **RTI Action Network**, a program of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, helps educators and families implement RTI effectively. It offers guidance on building support for, designing and implementing a school-wide RTI model customized to a specific school.

WHAT TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA/LD?

Apps, software, fonts, games, books, assistive technology and other tools can help children with dyslexia and other LD read more easily.

DyslexiaHelp provides descriptions and links for:

- Apps that can help dyslexic kids with reading, writing, spelling, articulation, phonics, organization and study skills, and math
- Software and assistive technology for listening, notetaking, phonics, reading, writing and study support
- Fun educational games for kids with dyslexia
- Lists of books that kids with dyslexia will enjoy reading, including the *Hank Zipzer* series about a young dyslexic (written by dyslexic actor Henry Winkler)

The **Dyslexia Training Institute's** Dyslexia for a Day: A Simulation of Dyslexia kit at can be used by individuals or groups of experienced teachers, teacher training candidates, practitioners or family members to gain a better understanding of what it's like to have dyslexia. The kit includes a handbook, full-length DVD with interviews and presentations, and master copies of materials.

ForDyslexia produces multisensory, research-based apps that help children with dyslexia build early literacy skills. Its Alphabetics app, available on the AppStore and Google Play, is designed for children ages 0-11 and is also appropriate for English language learners. ForDyslexia's blog provides summaries of scientific research, infographics and issues involving dyslexia.

GreatSchools provides many resources on assistive technology, including an Overview of Assistive Technology, a Parents' Guide to Assistive Technology and guides that focus on technologies for specific actions, such as writing or reading.

See the **National Center for Learning Disabilities'** Overview of Assistive Technology, Choosing an Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology and Learning Disabilities (video), for expertise and advice to parents.

OpenDyslexic.org offers a free, downloadable font that increases the readability of text for readers with dyslexia.

ProfessorGarfield.org, created by *Garfield* cartoonist (and dyslexic) Jim Davis's company and foundation in partnership with Ball State University, provides free, entertaining and standards-based digital learning and assessment tools, lesson plans and content to cultivate children's literacy. Look on the Teacher's Lounge page (sitemap) for **SparkTop.org**, a source of games, creative exercises, forums and more for kids with dyslexia and LDs.

Simon Technology Center at PACER (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) provides software, adaptive devices and training to help children and young adults with disabilities learn to communicate through technology.

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities offers an Assistive Technology Tool Kit and other tools.

Universal Design for Learning is a set of principles for creating curricula, instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments that are flexible and can be customized to individual learning needs.

- **The Advocacy Institute** has produced a Parent's Guide to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that explains UDL principles and its relationship to assistive technology, accommodations, large-scale assessments and school completion.
- **CAST** is a nonprofit research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities through Universal Design for Learning. It provides a full line of UDL-oriented learning tools for students, teachers and parents. CAST also offers online courses, workshops, and institutes.
- The **National Center on Universal Design for Learning**, created by CAST, has links to UDL examples, resources, research and videos. Its Planning for All Learners (PAL) Toolkit applies UDL to planning and developing curricula in ways that promote access, participation and progress in the general education curriculum for all learners.

WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT AS THE PARENT OF A CHILD WITH DYSLEXIA OR OTHER LD?

The Advocacy Institute and the **Children's Law Clinic at Duke Law School** produced Preparing for Special Education Mediation and Resolution Sessions: A Guide for Families and Advocates, *which explains* the expanded dispute resolution options offered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

Dyslexic Advantage is a nonprofit organization that provides an online forum, videos, research summaries and discussion groups.

Dyslexic and Unstoppable has a series of videos for parents of dyslexics explaining issues and strategies.

DyslexiaHelp, operated by the University of Michigan's office of services for students with disabilities, provides tools, information and research to parents, teachers, employers and individuals about dyslexia and language disabilities. Resources for parents include information on the dyslexia evaluation process, guidelines for successful intervention, a library of videos and podcasts, and information on and links to schools and intervention professionals around the country and in Canada that specialize in dyslexia.

Headstrong Nation is a nonprofit organized around the motto, "Dyslexia is not a disease—it's a community." It provides facts and tools and is developing local Dyslexia Empowerment Groups.

LD Online, a national service provided by the public television station in Washington, D.C., offers information and advice about learning disabilities and ADHD. The website features articles, videos, webcasts, audio and transcripts; monthly columns by experts; first-person essays; children's writing and artwork; a comprehensive resource guide; very active forums; and a Yellow Pages referral directory of professionals, schools and products. Resources for

parents include links to professionals, schools, camps, learning centers and products; a guide to collaborating with IEP teams; and more.

Learning Ally, a provider of audiobooks for people with dyslexia and other LD, also offers one-on-one consultations with parent support specialists, public and members-only webinars, and referrals to tutors and LD specialists. Learning Ally's 1in5 Initiative offers a forum for sharing stories and experiences.

The **PACER Center** (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) is a parent training and information center for families of children and youth with all disabilities from birth through 21 years old. Located in Minneapolis, it serves families across the nation. Online resources include publications, webinars and workshops for parents.

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities publishes Five Keys to Navigating the School System and Who's Who: A Guide to Navigating the Power Elite in Your School System.

XtraordinaryPeople highlights dyslexic children's talents and strengths by providing information and inspirational testimonials by famous people with dyslexia.

The **Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity** is a source of research, advocacy and information on ways to improve the lives of people with dyslexia. Resources for parents include: clues to look for to ascertain whether a child has dyslexia; how to interpret test results; strategies for helping a struggling reader; summer programs offered by schools that specialize in dyslexia and LD; information on assistive technology; and stories from other parents. Resources for teachers include tips for teaching, testing and assessing struggling readers; articles; and reading lists for information on dyslexia. The website also offers tips from dyslexic students for their peers.

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ON THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA?

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** define the rights of students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, including educational programs, special services, and accommodations. Several sources provide information on these laws and relevant state-level legislation.

The **Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund** (DREDF) is a national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities. Among other things, DREDF educates parents of children with LD to use the laws to challenge exclusion and discrimination, and advocates for the rights of individuals and families.

The **Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE)** website, operated by the **PACER Center**, provides parents, educators, service providers and policymakers with news and information related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other relevant education topics.

The **National Center on Learning Disabilities'** Parent Guide to IDEA contains chapters on pre-referral services, evaluation, eligibility determination, special education options, dispute resolution and more. Also see NCLD's IEP Fundamentals and IEP Roadmap infographic, which gives an easy-to-use overview of the IEP process. Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, **a guide co-authored by NCLD and The Advocacy Institute,** provides information on the ADA Amendments Act (effective January 1, 2009) and the significant changes it made to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 relating to school-age children.

The **Parent Education Network** offers many resources on education law and dispute resolution.

Wrightslaw offers information about special education law and advocacy for children with disabilities.

WHO IS ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA/LD AT THE COMMUNITY, STATE, OR NATIONAL LEVEL?

The Advocacy Institute is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to the development of products, projects and services that work to improve the lives of people with disabilities. It provides research reports; a webinar-driven Advocacy Academy for special-education advocates; and consultative services for educators, counselors, service providers, organizations and government entities.

Decoding Dyslexia is a network of parent-led grassroots movements in 45 states working to raise dyslexia awareness, empower families to support their children, and inform policymakers about best practices to identify, remediate, and support students with dyslexia. Their policy priorities include: reaching a universal definition and understanding of "dyslexia" in the state education code; mandatory teacher training on dyslexia; mandatory early screening tests for dyslexia; mandatory dyslexia remediation programs that can be accessed through both general and special education; and access to appropriate assistive technologies in public schools. Each state movement is organized independently; most have Facebook pages, websites and other social media outlets. Decoding Dyslexia also offers a Guide to Starting a Grassroots Movement for Dyslexia and a slideshow on Parent Advocacy in the Digital Age.

The **Learning Disabilities Association of America** supports parents, recommends action on pending legislation that affects individuals with learning disabilities and/or their families, and works with school systems to improve programs and services for students with LD. Its website includes legislative updates; information on how to advocate effectively, including videos and webinars; and links to more than 100 state and local affiliates, which operate an information and referral network.

Literate Nation is a nationwide, grassroots organization that researches, designs, manages and executes literacy-focused advocacy campaigns. It has produced model state literacy policies and a grassroots leadership guide for starting a state literacy movement.

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities** provides the LD Advocates Guide, with guidance on which federal policies and laws govern the rights of individuals with LD, how to

work with policymakers to protect those rights, how to work with media to increase awareness of LD issues and more.

WHO IS WORKING ON THE MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS OF DYSLEXIA?

The **Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity's** Multicultural Dyslexia Awareness Initiative (MDAI) frames dyslexia as a civil rights issue, because dyslexic children of color from low-income families often do not receive appropriate diagnoses or interventions and therefore fall through the educational cracks. MDAI aims to educate communities of color about dyslexia and mobilize a grassroots effort to engage educators, legislators, policymakers, scholars and philanthropists around policy changes to benefit children with dyslexia.

The **National Association for the Education of African American Children with Learning Differences** works to increase awareness about learning differences and promote parent advocacy in communities of color. It publishes One Child at a Time . . . A Parent Handbook and Resource Directory for African American Families with Children Who Learn Differently.

The **PACER Center** provides programs for Native American, African American, Hispanic/Latino, Somali and Southeast Asian communities. Many of its publications have been translated into Hmong, Somali and Spanish.

WHERE CAN I LEARN OR DO MORE?

Bright Solutions for Dyslexia provides book lists and a YouTube channel with videos on dyslexia science, issues and strategies.

The **Children of the Code Project** has conducted more than 100 interviews with field-leading scientists and scholars and produced more than 140 video segments on subjects ranging from the origin of writing to the neurology involved in reading. The project's mission is to help educators, parents and other caregivers better understand the challenges involved in learning to read.

The **Council for Exceptional Children's** Division for Learning Disabilities is an international professional organization for teachers, psychologists, clinicians, administrators, higher education professionals, parents and others. It provides research, videos, webinars for educators and answers to common questions from experts.

The **Dyslexia Think Tank** commissions research, conducts educational forums and disseminates information on effective learning techniques and tools for children with dyslexia.

The **Dyslexia Training Institute** offers online classes and webinars on dyslexia, reading comprehension strategies, the Orton-Gillingham approach, special education law and dyslexia,

structured word inquiry, and advocacy; certificate programs in dyslexia and advocacy; and other resources.

Dyslexia Untied, a blog by Ken Budd, summarizes new research on how dyslexia manifests and strategies for overcoming it. Topics include research-based skills for parents of dyslexic children and information on issues related to LD, such as self-esteem. Although Budd is based in Edinburgh, UK, he draws from global sources of information.

The **Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation** produced a Learning Disabilities Field Guide with information on and links to the most recent books, documentaries, organizations and initiatives on dyslexia and LD. Tremaine intends to update the guide every six months.

The **International Dyslexia Association** (IDA) is a nonprofit membership organization serving individuals with dyslexia, their families and professionals in the field. It operates 44 Branches in the United States and Canada and has 21 Global Partners in 18 countries. The IDA's activities include advocacy, information and referral services, parent support and outreach, and the development of standards and practices for service providers. The IDA publishes Annals of Dyslexia, an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the scientific study of dyslexia and related language disabilities; Perspectives on Language and Literacy, a quarterly collection of practical articles for educators; and a newsletter.

The **National Center for Learning Disabilities** works to empower parents, enable young adults with LD, transform schools and create policy and advocacy impact. Resources include checklists and worksheets, e-books, podcasts, videos, a resource locator and a monthly newsletter on LD issues and information. See The State of Learning Disabilities for data and analyses.

The **Stern Center for Language and Learning** evaluates and teaches children and adults with learning disabilities, dyslexia, language disorders, autism, attention deficit disorders and learning style differences; designs and delivers research-based workshops and courses for educators, live and online; and conducts research on best practices to help all kinds of learners succeed.

Many organizations hold events:

- **Children's Dyslexia Centers, Inc.**, holds an annual 5K WALK/RUN to help children with dyslexia at locations around the country. For dates and locations, click here.
- **Eye to Eye** holds discussions with experts and other events.
- **The International Dyslexia Association** holds an annual conference.
- **The Learning Disabilities Association of America** holds an annual conference.