

How Did the Experts Get It So Wrong When It Comes to Teaching the Dyslexic to Read?

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The Dilemma

In K-5, 25% of the children do not master reading through phonics instruction. And trailing this figure, too many children who make it to their high school graduation cannot even read their diplomas. Obviously, reading experts, dyslexia experts, and parents banking on phonics to teach their children to read need to rethink the usefulness of this approach when phonics is not working for their child in grades K-5. After 3rd grade, children are expected to read well enough so that they can now read to learn. However, 25% of the 4th graders who cannot read to learn tend to fall behind.

Summary

Three Myths and Nine Reasons Why Experts Have It So Wrong When It Comes to Teaching the Dyslexic to Read

Myth #1: For all children, letters are part of the written language and make sense, and it follows that understanding phonics and phonemes is essential to recognizing and reading words.

1. **Missed:** Most people overlook the abstract nature of the four steps of phonics a child is required to master in order to become a successful reader. The first three steps are abstract (symbolic in nature and without associated concrete meaning) making it extremely hard for the dyslexic to learn to read:

- **Abstract Step 1:** Learn sounds for letters and parts of words

e.g., the word “confusion,” sound out each letter:

c, o, n, f, u, s, i, o, n

- **Abstract Step 2:** Learn how to interpret phonetic symbols and shift them into the sounds of letters and letter groups.

/kən'fyoŋZHən/

- **Abstract Step 3:** Learn to use all the rules and exceptions of the rule to synthesize the phonemic sounds of all the letters and letter groups into a word

con... fu... sion

- **Concrete Step 4:** Finally, the child can recognize and read a concrete word or an abstract (Sight) word like “confusion.”

This largely abstract, 4-step process presents a **gargantuan task** for any learner, dyslexic or not. The level of **confusion** generated by this phonics process overwhelms the dyslexic, and the 3-D learner, derailing their ability to learn.

2. **Missed:** For the dyslexic, abstract 2-D (two-dimensional) symbols and words must be mastered three-dimensionally within the dyslexic's mind.
3. **Missed:** It is imperative that abstract 2-D written symbols (letters, punctuation marks, and abstract words) require 3-D (three-dimensional experiences that give meaning to these symbols. The rote and drill of lists of words, phonics sounds for letters, and all the rule exceptions for recognizing words do not provide meaning to Sight words and abstract symbols. Instead, they can make learning to read very troublesome, confusing, frustrating, and tedious for the dyslexic.
4. **Missed:** Understanding what triggers confusion when the dyslexic attempts to read. The interruptions caused when meaningless, abstract symbols and Sight words are met in text cause most of the interrupter reading disability symptoms:
stumble, hesitate, insert word, omit word, replace word, misread word, omit line(s), miss a punctuation stop, or skipped line(s), or a combination thereof while reading.
5. **Missed:** 3-D mastery of the three parts of a Sight word or abstract symbol is vital to the process of learning to read words, concrete or abstract.
6. **Missed:** The dyslexic must become aware of and [tame the dragon of his Mind's Eye](#) to begin consistent, accurate perception of flat 2-D letters, words, and symbols. The dyslexic needs to be given the tools to learn to stabilize his Mind's Eye on one consistent point of perception. Accomplishing stabilization of his Mind's Eye opens the door for progress and success in learning to read.

Myth #2: Perfectionism is needed when learning to read; children only learn to read when their reading is organized down to the smallest detail.

7. **Missed:** Dyslexic 3-D learners see the word picture and get confused by tearing a word into pieces through phonics and similar programs.

Myth #3: Experts are afraid children, left to their own devices and not following a very specific, detailed program, will resist being willing to learn to read.

8. **Missed:** The starting point for ALL children entering elementary school is excitement and the prospect of learning. These children WANT to learn to read.

9. Missed: Use of a different approach to learning to read that fits the 3-D, multi-sensory thinking style of the dyslexic.

The dyslexic is constantly thinking in terms of physical experience that gives a thought or word meaning. Mastery of the 300 Sight words and symbols can be learned at the same time your child is taught phonics. However, all that is needed to read at grade level or higher are the 3-D learning tools found on the Magical I Am website.

What Educators Have Overlooked, Missed?

What about the 20% of the population that are dyslexic and the 40% of the elementary population who just do not like to read? Today, they are falling behind in school because they learn to read poorly with phonics or other learning to read programs. What have educators missed to help them?

The Importance of Sight Words and Abstract Symbols

The dyslexic child and many young learners are 3-D thinkers – that is, the input of their senses guides them to know and think about the external world. They learn best when there are a lot of different sensory inputs.

Although modern phonics and reading programs in schools and school systems have added multi-sensory materials and methods, they have missed the main point: The importance of providing sensory experiences of the *Three Parts of Each Word* in order to recognize and read Sight words and abstract symbols. The rote drilling of lists of words does not teach children how to read Sight words and abstract symbols in written stories.

The Three Parts of a Word must be presented, at the same time, in a sensory experience:

What the word Looks like

What the word Sounds like

What the word Means

Why
is
The
Style
of

Learning Whole Word So Important?

All 3-D learners, which includes most dyslexics, perceive the word or symbol through their senses. They don't automatically break down a word into its parts and then re-synthesize the parts to recognize the word. If there is nothing about the word that can be associated (giving it meaning) with the dyslexic 3-D learner's sensory information, the word is unrecognizable and therefore exceedingly difficult to learn to read.

The dyslexic 3-D Learner's "Mind's Eye" will shift perceptual position several times in an instant when the sensory input of a word does not "make sense" and causes confusion. The Mind's Eye is the *energy field* that is a composite of all the input, mental processes, memory, and imagination of the brain. The Mind's Eye is what recognizes an object, event, person, thing, sunset. The position of the Mind's Eye must be stabilized for perception of a word to become consistent, and the word recognized each time it is seen.

What is it About Sight Words that Tends to Cause Reading Disability Symptoms?

Sight words most often trigger reading disability symptoms:

E.g., *hesitate, insert word, omit word, replace word, misread word, omit line(s), miss a punctuation stop, skipped line(s) or a combination thereof while reading.*

To observe this, ask your child to read a few paragraphs of a story that you also have a copy of. Mark each word that your child misreads. When your child is done, you will find that they misread words are Sight words, and that your child had read past some of the punctuation pause stop signs, creating run-on sentences that offer little meaning.

Concrete and Abstract Words

There are **concrete words**, like **tree, cat, and lemon**, and there are abstract **words**, (often called Sight words) like **I, on, the**. The **difference** between these two kinds of **words** is that the **content** of **concrete words** can be **physically experienced**. Once a **child learns** to **recognize** the **word** for their **pet**, a "**cat**," the **child** can **picture confidently** a **cat** any **time** they see the **word** in **writing**. However, what does a "the" **look** like, **taste** like, **feel** like in your **hand**, **smell** like, **sound** like? No one knows. "The" is a Sight **word**, by **definition** this **means** there is no **way** to have a **physical experience** of "the."

There are 105 words in the above paragraph. The concrete words are **bold (37 words)** and the rest of the words without bold are abstract (68 Sight words). Sixty-five percent of the paragraph consists of Sight words. Are you beginning to understand the power of learning to read Sight words?

As another graphic example of the difficulty in reading Sight words and abstract symbols: here is a poem by Jean Vanier with the Sight words removed. Does it make any sense when you cannot recognize or understand (represented by blank spaces) the Sight words of the poem?

Poem by Jean Vanier

Poem without Stumble Words Showing

Version One:

To Love is not to give of your riches
but to reveal to others their riches;
their gifts, their value;
and to trust them and their
capacity to grow.
So it is important to approach people
in their brokenness and littleness
gently
so gently,
not forcing yourself on them,
but accepting them as they are,
with humility and respect.
 (by Jean Vanier)

Version two:

Love give
 riches
 reveal riches
 gifts value
 trust
 capacity grow
 important approach
 people
 brokenness littleness
 gently
 gently
 forcing yourself
 accepting
 humility respect

Consider this fact: *Sight words make up over 50% of the text read in K-5.* If a child has not mastered reading Sight words, the child will often show reading disability symptoms when meeting one or more Sight words in the reading text.

Abstract Symbols

And so far, we have only looked at abstract words. All symbols are abstract, and the common symbols we work with in reading and writing are the 52 upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet and the punctuation marks. Although most kindergarten children can recite the alphabet for you, this does not mean they recognize and understand the meaning and correct orientation (e.g., do they confuse “b” with “d”, “p”, “q”?) of all the letters when they meet them while reading a story, or writing.

Without learning that punctuation marks are how an author conveys their meaning, the words on paper can become a series of long run-on sentences to the reader, and clear understanding of content is impossible.

Why Have Educators Missed The Importance of Sight Words?

Lists of Sight words and symbols are often given to children to learn by rote memory. Yet, these children are still likely when they read them in text to *stumble, hesitate, insert word, omit word, replace word, misread word, omit line(s), miss a punctuation stop, or a combination thereof while reading.*

The Inconsistency of the Occurrence of Misreading a Sight word.

This inconsistency of reading errors for the same words makes it easy to miss connecting Sight words as a cause of reading disability symptoms. Maybe the child reads fairly fluidly through the first few sentences, or paragraph, and then suddenly cannot read the word “on,” even

though the child could read the word “on” two sentences before this moment. What interrupts the child’s ability to read this word some of the time?

The Interrupt Dynamic

Each time an un-mastered Sight word (i.e., cannot be read in text fluidly with understanding of the meaning) is encountered when reading, it *causes an interruption in the flow of that child’s thought process*. This interruption, or a series of this kind of interruption, occurs because the words make no sense to the child. The experience is like meeting a blank space in a sentence every time you meet a Sight word you have not mastered.

E.g., If the Sight words used in the last sentence above are not mastered by the child, the sentence **could look to the brain** of this child like this:

... .. meeting ... blank space sentence ... time ... meet word
mastered.

The child’s train of thought, and understanding of what is being read, are interrupted by each word that does not make sense.

Since the dyslexic constantly thinks in terms of whole-picture meaning, they must master 300 Sight words and symbols, as well as the alphabet(s) – all of which have no associated image to picture. By doing so, they will eliminate the common interrupters that disrupt comprehension and increase the desire to stay in the task of reading.

Why Learn all 300 Sight Words?

The Inconsistent Occurrence of Reading Disability Symptoms makes it impossible to identify which of the 300 most commonly read Sight words and symbols a child must learn to master to learn to read. A child must master the upper and lower-case Alphabet, and ALL 300 words and symbols (14 punctuation marks, and 286 Sight words) to fluidly read with comprehension.

To do this, the dyslexic has to become aware of and begin to tame the “dragon” of their *Mind’s Eye*. With a little practice in the skill of stabilizing their mind’s eye, the neural pathways develop that provide consistent perception of flat 2-D letters, words, and symbols.

Another Way to Learn to Read - In a Style that Fits How Dyslexic 3-D Learners Think

Young readers who cannot learn to read well using the tools of phonics or phonemic awareness usually do better when taught words through sensory experiences that teach them the three parts of every word:

- What the word **LOOKS** like
- What the word **SOUNDS** like
- What the word **MEANS**

This *whole word approach* helps them to learn to recognize and comprehend these words every time they meet them in literature. When they can do this, we say they have developed “mastery” of the words.

As the basic concrete and Sight words and abstract symbols are mastered, a child’s confidence grows, and reading becomes an exciting exploration. Then, these children are more prepared to learn to expand their future reading vocabulary using the 3-D tools, which can be found on our website in [Reading Tools](#). (look in the Reading Mastery/ Tools that Make Learning to Read Easy).

Bottom Line

Reading is more than decoding symbols into sounds. Reading must unlock meaning, excitement, discovery, adventure, a way to grow in knowledge and imagination. Learning to read is not the result of controlled attention to the letters of words.

Learning to read occurs *when the three parts of every word are mastered*, and this mastery leads to exploring meaning, understanding, new ideas, and adventures to new worlds and thoughts.

Learn to Read, so you can Read to Learn.™