

Dyslexia

Welcome to the Wee Speech Parent Podcast Series. This series is designed to aid parents understanding of communication development, treatment and other topics related to speech and language.

My name is Kate Connolly. I am an ASHA certified pediatric speech and language pathologist. During this podcast segment I will be addressing how dyslexia impacts children in school.

It is important to start with the reminder that dyslexia is a disability that is neurologically based and wasn't caused by anything. There is absolutely no correlation to intelligence or cognition – kids with dyslexia are just as bright as their peers.

That said, reading is something your brain has to really work at because there is so much required all at once. The brain has to process the letter that you see, connected with that sound, while scanning forward to the next letter and on and on. It's a huge amount of activity for your brain to work with at once.

For individuals with dyslexia, the breakdown is typically in the connections and speed that the brain needs to complete all those steps. The phonological awareness piece is much more difficult for these individuals which, in turn, makes each of these processes in reading longer and more complicated.

For those kids in the 2nd and 3rd grade levels in particular, I've seen a lot of these difficulties becoming more significant as the trouble with reading starts to spill over into some other subjects. Math, which used to be a stronger area, now has word problems which are trouble areas. Now the new academic material is taught through text, as opposed to verbal instruction, so textbooks are now expected to be a source for information for all other subjects. Often, when allocating so many resources to trying to read a sentence, the child just doesn't have the ability to hold onto that information they just read for processing so they have trouble comprehending what they read. It can be very tricky.

So that brings us to what parents can do to help and there are lots of ways to support your child. Do your research on the IDEA laws and how to best support the teachers and staff in your child's school. Some important things to cover with the school district might be: accommodations for teaching new material verbally, verbally testing on material, and decreasing the reading/writing demands on the student.

As for some ideas for home, encouraging reading for fun is important for exposing new vocabulary and developing critical thinking skills. This can be very tricky to encourage for someone who finds reading harder, especially if their reading level is lower than the type of reading material they are interested in. Make sure to pick books that your child finds appealing and, if the text is too tricky, read aloud to them, even with older children. It is still an extremely beneficial activity, regardless of age. These days, audiobooks are easily accessible online or through your local library and they are great for age-appropriate reading exposure. There are also lots of apps out there designed specifically for "the catch-up reader" and may be motivating for your child. Anything you can do to expose your child to literature as best you can.

Thank you for listening to this podcast.

If you would like additional information on this or other speech and language topics, please see the additional resources on our website including the monthly newsletter, blogs, app reviews and our speech and language column. Please join us on FB for daily updates and speech and language related news.

Impact of Dyslexia in School Podcast

- There is no “cause” of dyslexia and there is no correlation with intelligence.
- Reading is a very complex activity and requires multiple processes to interact simultaneously.
- What happens with dyslexia?
 - The breakdown occurs in the *connection* and processing *speed* of those interactions.
 - The phonological awareness/processing that comes naturally with time to the average reader is much more difficult in individuals with dyslexia.
 - Second and third grade students will feel the impact of dyslexia increase as the academic settings requires increased use of reading/writing across subjects:
 - Math begins to use word problems.
 - New academic material is taught through text, rather than through verbal instruction.
 - Reading comprehension can be impaired secondary to the need to allocate most of their concentration to reading, rather than processing/synthesizing the information they’ve read.
- What can parents do to help?
 - Research IDEA laws to better advocate for your child. See the link in my Resources below.
 - Possible accommodations:
 - Teaching new material verbally
 - Verbal testing on material
 - Decreasing the reading/writing demands on the student
 - Encourage reading for fun to support vocabulary development and critical thinking skills.
 - Choose books the child is interested in, even if the text is above his/her reading level.
 - Read aloud to your child, regardless of age.
 - Audiobooks are available online and through your local library.
 - Explore some “catch-up reading” apps. See the link in my Resources below.

Thank you!

Resources

US Department of Education IDEA Law <http://idea.ed.gov/>

The International Dyslexia Association <http://www.interdys.org/>

Possible Therapy Approaches for Dyslexia:

- Lindamood Bell <http://www.lindamoodbell.com/>
- Orton Gillingham Program <http://www.orton-gillingham.com/>
- Wilson Language Training <http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/>

Literacy Apps for Struggling Readers

http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/special_ed/documents/apps_early_literacy.pdf