Unlocking the Code: What Dyslexia Therapy Is and Why It Matters

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What is the difference between a dyslexia screener and a test?

A test can give you a diagnosis for dyslexia. A screener cannot. A screener takes about twenty minutes. The testing is a battery of tests that is usually given over two days for several hours each day.



At least 15% of the population has dyslexia.

Children at The 3D School all have a diagnosis of dyslexia.

Who needs Dyslexia Therapy?

Students with dyslexia do.

How do we know if a student is dyslexic?

5 Clues
To Recognizing Dyslexia

1



Difficulty Rhyming

Children with dyslexia have a hard time hearing rhymes and making rhymes.

2



Consistently Inconsistent Reading

It is common for a child with dyslexia to show inconsistencies in their oral reading. One day, they may seem like they "have it" and the next day the text can seem brand new and difficult to read. Parents or teachers often think, "We just learned this!? You did this yesterday!?"

3



Writing & Spelling Are Hard

Writing can feel laborious and exhausting. Hearing sounds and placing them in the correct order to spell is very difficult and inconsistent.

4



Struggles With Word Retrieval

Even when it is familiar information, retrieving the words rapidly and presnting them orally in the correct order can be hard. You may hear lots of "thingys" and "ums" in conversation or other hesitations.

5



Challenges Memorizing Information

Memorizing math facts and sight words is a real challenge. Producing these pieces of information on demand is even more difficult.

What is Dyslexia?

"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses often foreshadow literacy challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important at any age, language and literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective."

Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors on **October 22, 2025**. For paper describing its scientific basis see **Defining Dyslexia: 2025 Revision**. For further details and related materials please visit ***2025 Definition Glossary and Resources***, which includes the IDA Definition Presentation and 2025 Definition Explanation. The *2002 Definition Consensus Project* remains available as a historical reference.



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What is Dyslexia?

1 in 5 students have a learning difference called dyslexia.

Learning Ally
The 1in5 Initiative

Strengths You May See

- Creativity and Imagination
- People Skills
- Outside the Box Problem Solving
- Building and Designing Talents
- Strong 3D Visual Skills
- Never Gives Up

Weaknesses You May Notice

- Reading and Rhyming
- Writing and Note Taking
- Left/Right Confusion
- Organization and Time Management
- Following Directions
- Memorization (as in Math Facts and Spelling)

Supporting Students with Dyslexia in the Classroom

- Allow extra time to think and process
- Encourage use of assistive technology
- Be approachable and don't over-correct
- Break information into smaller steps
- Avoid asking student to read aloud in class
- Teach with pictures, stories, and hands-on activities
- Allow alternative assignments or modified workload
- Provide class notes, formulas, and word banks

Other Things You Can Do to Help

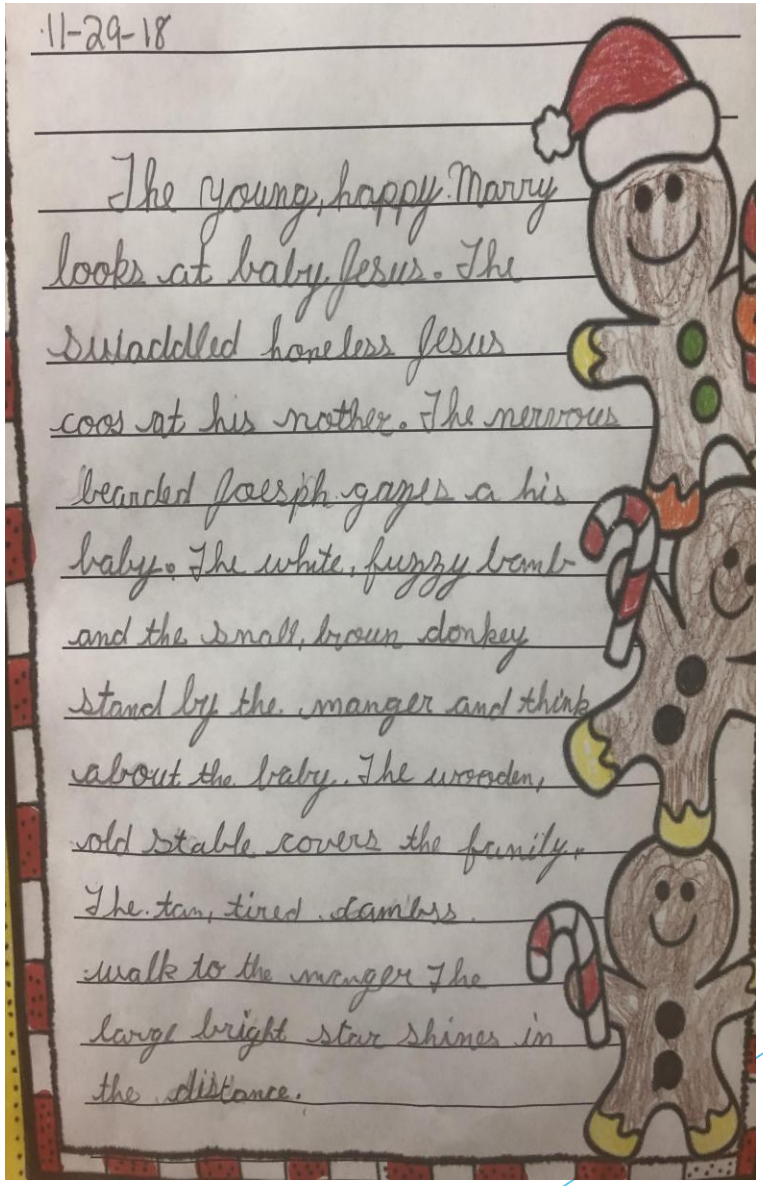
- Focus on strengths and abilities
- Accept, encourage and support
- Empower self-advocacy
- Build resiliency skills
- Help create a support network
- Learn all you can about the 1in5

What is dyslexia again?

- Neurobiological in origin
- Characterized by poor reading or poor spelling
- Phonological deficit
- Specific learning disability
- Unexpected in comparison to other cognitive abilities and good instruction
- Secondary consequences may be reduced comprehension and lower vocabulary than peers because they may not read as much as their peers
- It is NOT seeing letters backwards.
- It is NOT a disease.
- It is NOT an eye or visual problem.

What should I look for in dyslexia therapy?

- Dyslexia Therapy:
- Systematic
- Cumulative
- Multisensory
- Include Direct Instruction
- Have Discovery Learning
- Diagnostic and Prescriptive
- Should be at least three times a week
- Should be in a therapeutic setting
- Should last 60 minutes
- Should be Orton Gillingham based



Dyslexia therapy should include…

- Phonological and phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary Work
- Comprehension Strategies
- Spelling
- Handwriting
- Composition
- Syllable Types
- Word Parts







Dyslexia therapy is not a quick fix!

The schedule of dyslexia looks something like this the first year:

Rapid Naming	5
Handwriting	5
IRD Deck	3
Spelling Deck	3
New Concept	10
Reading Practice	5
Spelling Practice	10
Extended Reading and Writing	15-20
Oral Language	5
Read Aloud	5

Integrity in every field matters!

1. Do not be afraid to ask questions.
2. Therapy needs to be consistent.
3. Therapy needs to be in a small group.
4. Attention issues need to be addressed in order for a student to make progress.
5. The therapist should communicate with the parent.

2nd Year Therapy

- Word Study
- Handwriting
- IRD Deck
- Spelling Deck
- New Concept
- Reading Practice
- Spelling Practice
- Extended Reading and Writing

Fluency

DMS

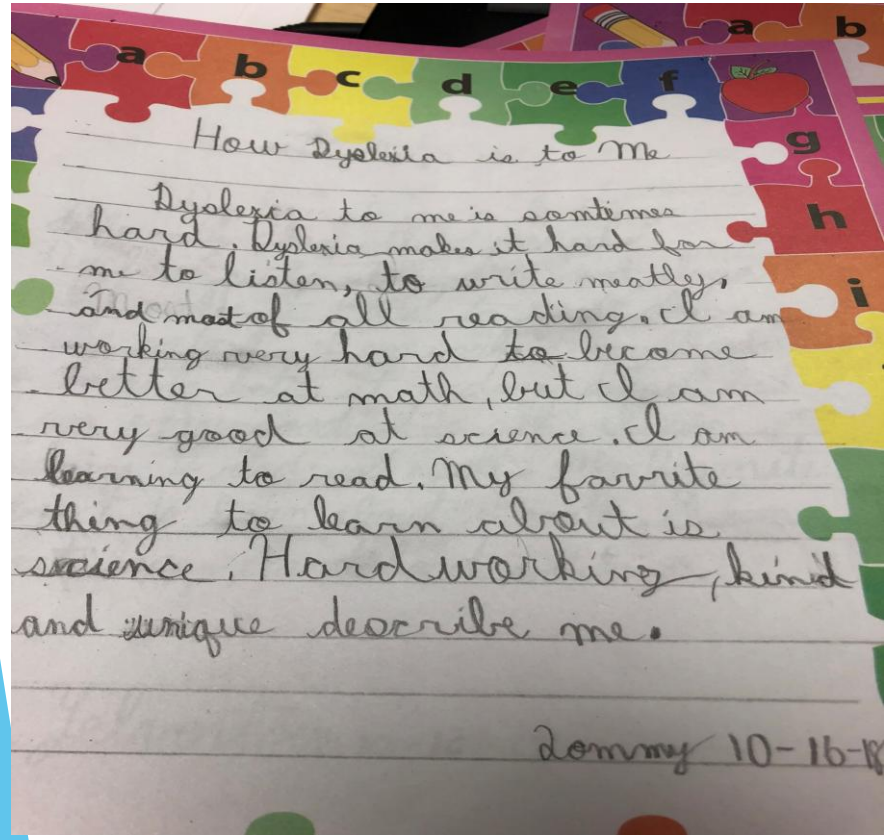
Paragraph Writing

Grammar

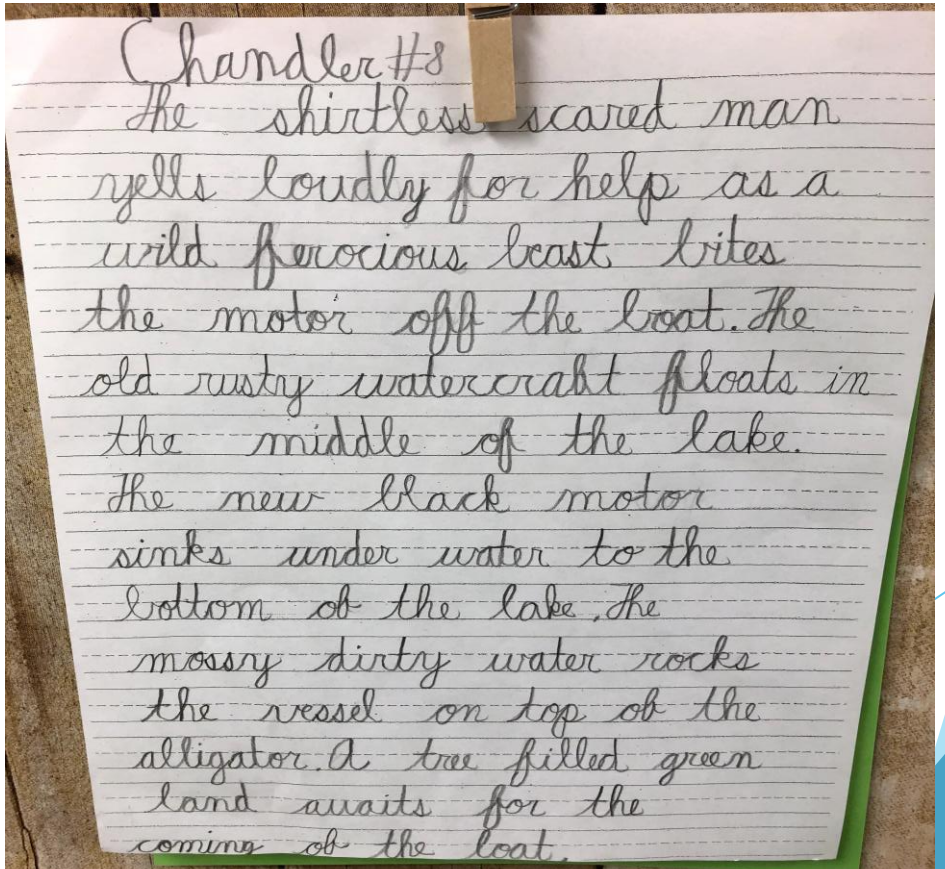
Reading

How Therapy Progresses in 2nd and 3rd Year

2nd year more emphasis on Fluency, Comprehension and Paragraph Writing



3rd Year More Emphasis on Becoming Independent Learners





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Dyslexia therapists should always be diagnostic and prescriptive.

Domains of Language

- Phonology
- Pragmatics
- Orthography
- Semantics
- Syntax
- Morphology

Phonology

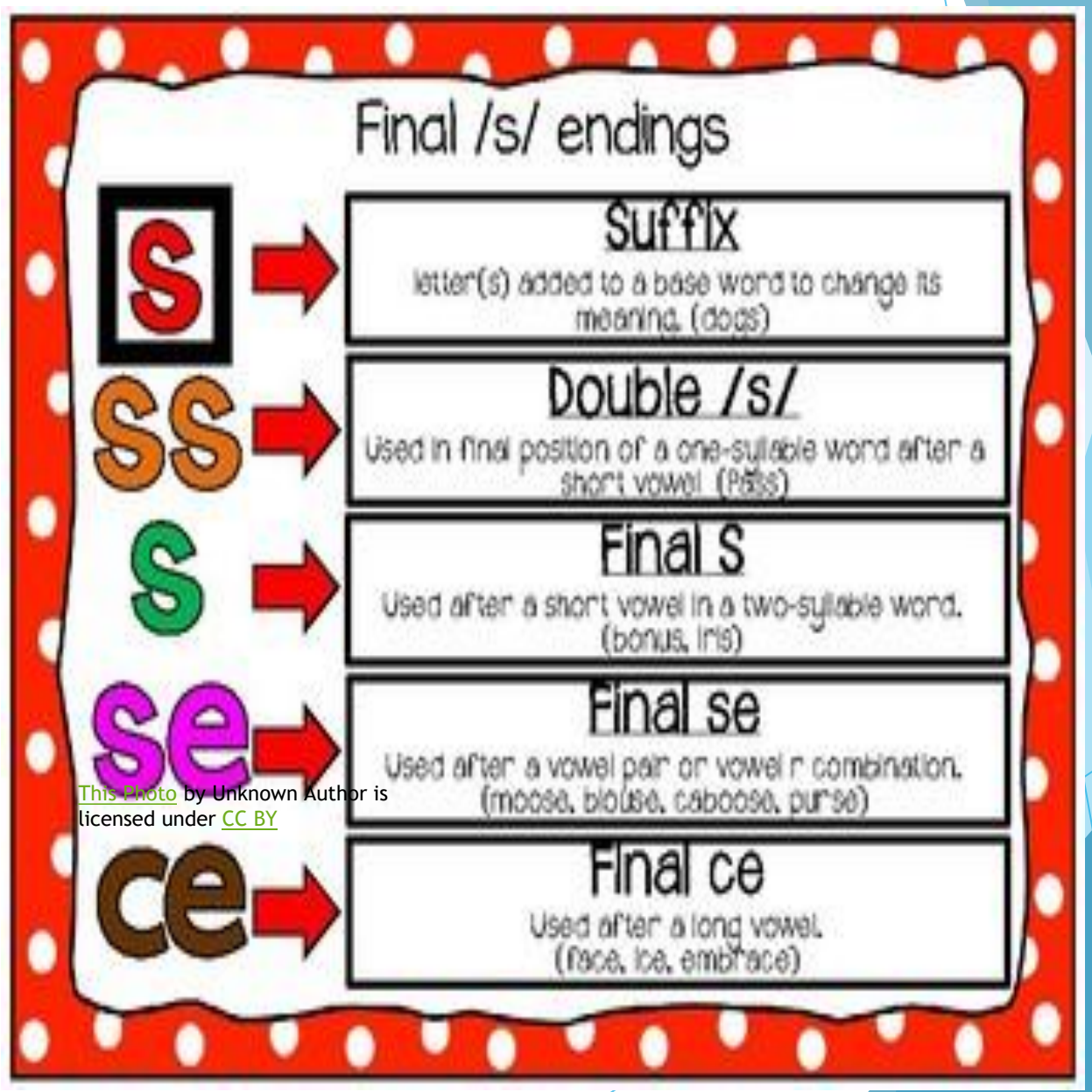
Sound structure of a language

Pragmatics

- Social use of language
- Body language
- Taking turns in a conversations
- Figures of speech
- Taking things too literally
- Not getting jokes
- Standing too close to others

Orthography

- Written representation of sounds
- Spelling



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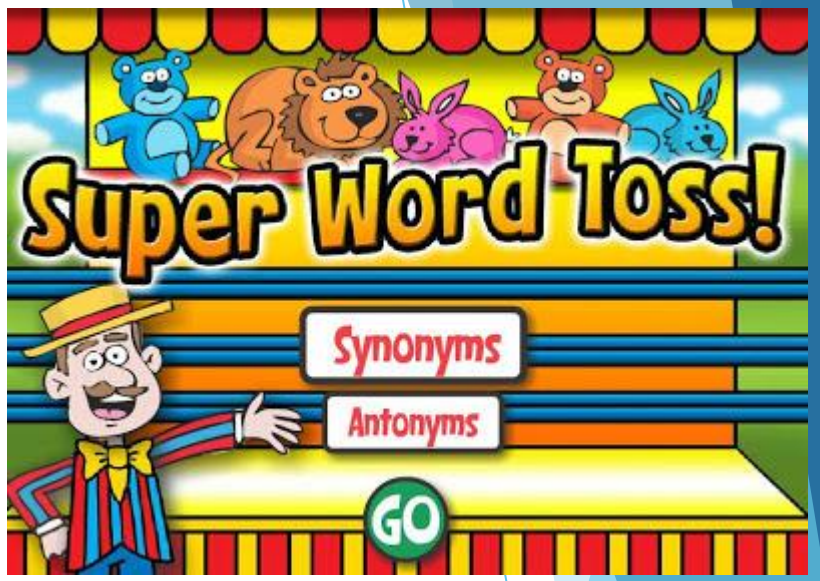
Semantics

Meaning



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Definitions

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Syntax- Grammar



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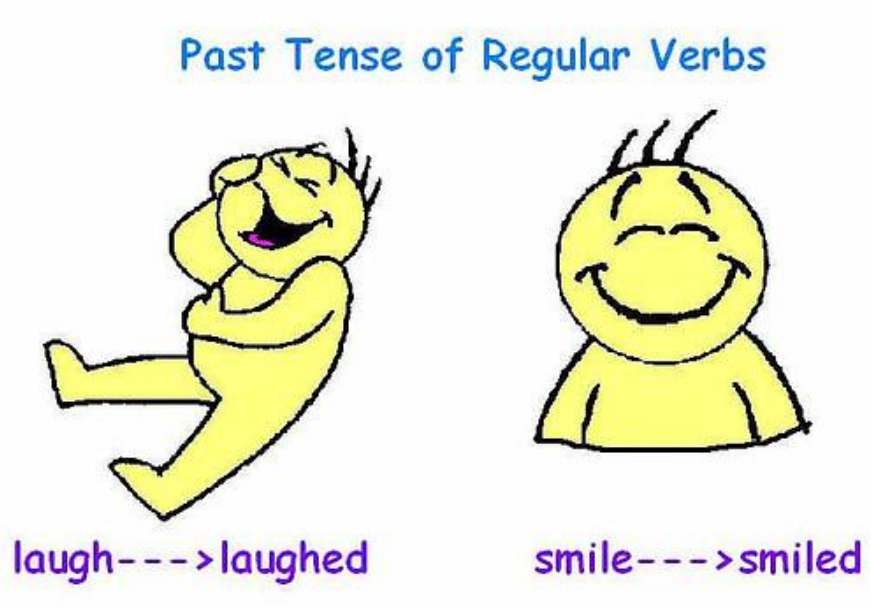
Syntax



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Morphology

- Base words
- Suffix
- Derivative
- Prefix
- Roots
- Word Detective
- Word Parts
- Word Profiles
- Word Origins

All the Domains of Language are addressed daily during Dyslexia Therapy

Rapid Naming – orthography, phonology
IRD Deck – orthography, phonology
Spelling Deck – phonology, orthography
New Concept – orthography
Reading Practice – orthography
Spelling Practice – orthography
Extended Reading and Writing – orthography, semantics, syntax
Oral Language – semantics, pragmatics, phonology, orthography
Read Aloud – pragmatics, semantics, phonology

Principles and Methods of Dyslexia Therapy

- Explicit
- Systematic and Cumulative
- Hands-on, Engaging, and Multimodal
- Diagnostic and Prescriptive

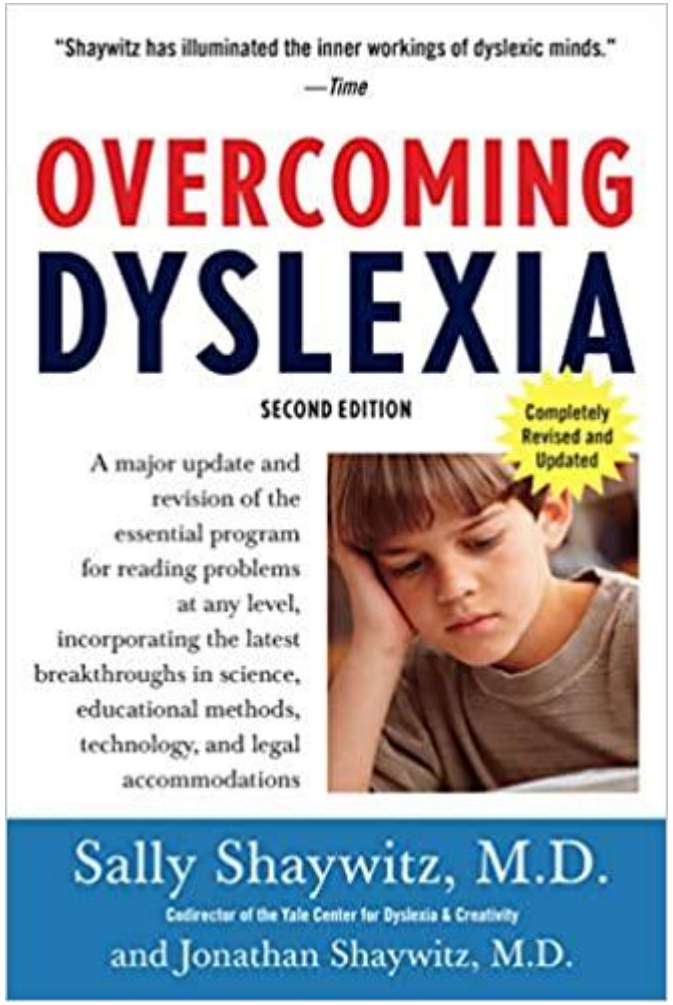


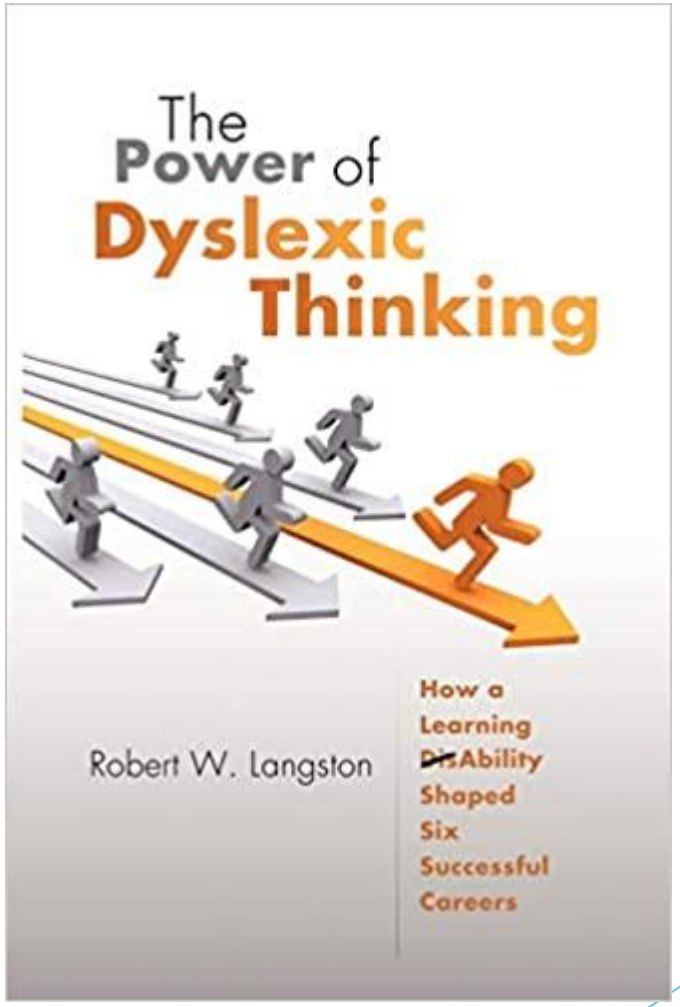
What does it take to become a dyslexia therapist at WCU?

- Classroom instruction for two years
- Supervised clinical hours (720 hours)
- Masters program –almost all are already certified teachers or SLPS

“Dyslexia is not a pigeonhole to say you can’t do anything. It is an opportunity and a possibility to learn differently. You have magical brains, they just process differently. Don’t feel like you should be held back by it.”

Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice Mary Elizabeth of New York- Hello, Daily News as found on https://www.understood.org


"Shaywitz has illuminated the inner workings of dyslexic minds."
—Time
OVERCOMING
DYSLEXIA
SECOND EDITION
Completely Revised and Updated
A major update and revision of the essential program for reading problems at any level, incorporating the latest breakthroughs in science, educational methods, technology, and legal accommodations
Sally Shaywitz, M.D.
Codirector of the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity
and Jonathan Shaywitz, M.D.


The Power of Dyslexic Thinking
Robert W. Langston
How a Learning DisAbility Shaped Six Successful Careers

Websites

https://learningally.org/Solutions-for-Home/Dyslexia-Resources/Articles

https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dyslexia/symptoms-causes/syc-20353552https://learningally.org/Solutions-for-Home/Dyslexia-Resources/Articles

http://www.dyslexia.yale.edu/

https://dyslexiaida.org/

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