

Understanding Dyslexia

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How Prevalent is Dyslexia?

If you Google this question you will get answers ranging from 5% all the way up to 20%. How can that be? Do dyslexia experts just not agree? Not exactly. The reason behind the range of answers is because the prevalence of dyslexia is not a single number but a range based on the severity of the disability. This makes sense. We would expect that a less severe reading disability would occur more frequently than a more severe reading disability, and it does. Approximately 1 in 5 people will have a minor difficulty that will be able to be remediated relatively quickly, and 1 in 20 people will have more profound life-long difficulties. That's why the rates are reported as 5% to 20%.

To take it a step further, Dr. Richard Wagner and his team from the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) have been able to determine that certain conditions can actually increase or decrease your chance of having dyslexia. According to Dr. Wagner, if you are a girl, you have about a 3% risk of having dyslexia. Boys have about a 7% risk. If you had risk indicators on a first-grade dyslexia screen, your risk increases to 15%. Having ADHD increases your risk to 19%, and if you have a family history of reading difficulty, your risk increases to 26%. Having a combination of risk factors increases your risk even more. So, for example, if you are a male with ADHD your risk is 24%. A male with ADHD and a family history has a 76% risk of having dyslexia.

Current screening methods are good at finding our poor readers, but they're not as accurate at actually finding students with dyslexia. If Dr. Wagner's research can help us better understand the prevalence and probability of dyslexia, then we will be better able to identify and screen for it in the future.

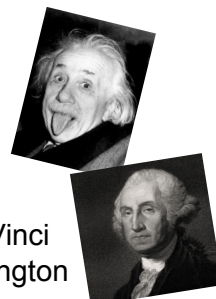
Did you know?

Some very notable and successful people throughout history have had dyslexia. Here are just a few:

Tom Cruise
Keanu Reeves
Vince Vaughn
Salma Hayek
Cher
Tommy Hilfiger

Steve Jobs
Mohammad Ali
Magic Johnson
Nolan Ryan
Tim Tebow
Jennifer Aniston

Kiera Knightly
Albert Einstein
Walt Disney
Pablo Picasso
Leonardo Da Vinci
George Washington



Resource Corner

Dr. Wagner, mentioned in the article to the right, is an associate director at the **Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR)**. The FCRR is one of the leading research centers on reading and reading related disorders. Their website has an extensive resource database and offers lots of student center activities that you can print out and use in the classroom or at home. www.fcrr.com

The Texas State Library & Archives Commission has a program called **Texas Talking Books**. It is free to apply to the program and they have over 80,000 titles to choose from. Their books are read on special devices that are sent out on loan from TTB. Checking books out works similar to a library. You request the books and they send them when they are available. You can access their program information at <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/index.html>

Am I Giving Them a Crutch?

How can we best help our students with dyslexia? When is it too much? Are they going to be dependent on these supports? Are we giving them a crutch?

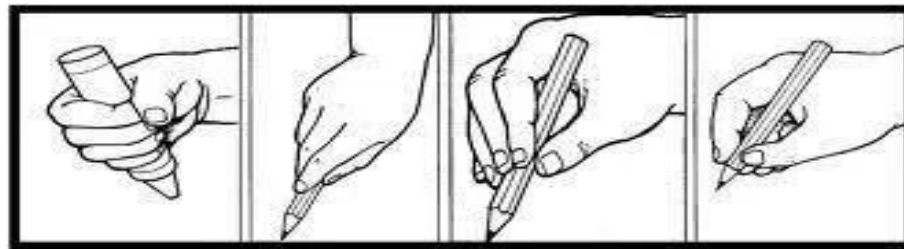
If a student has dyslexia, ordinary classroom activities become instantly harder for them. Things often take longer for them to complete. They get questions wrong because they misread them or spend so much energy trying to figure out what the words are in the question that they miss key details. So for the child that has difficulty reading accurately, reading the questions and answer choices to them on an assignment helps them to actually demonstrate what they understood in the reading passage or if they actually know how to solve a math problem instead of whether or not they just couldn't read the question. Accommodations help level the playing field.

But wouldn't it help all students to give them accommodations? Possibly. The difference is, for the typical reader, not having something like questions and answer choices read to them will likely not cause them to do poorly on the assignment like it would for the student with dyslexia.

It's not about giving students a crutch. Accommodations are about finding the right fit and removing the burden of their disability in order to help them be successful.



Get a Grip: A Few Words on Pencil Grasp



1 - 1 ½ years

2 - 3 years

3 ½ - 4 years

4½ - 7 years

A tripod grasp (the last picture above) is considered the most efficient way to hold a pencil for writing. It allows for the most movement of the fingertips. This grasp generally develops between ages 4 ½ and 7, but some fail to ever develop a tripod grasp.

So, what's the big deal? If they can hold the pencil and make letters, why worry about how they hold the pencil? Students who use an immature pencil grip usually do so because they're trying to stabilize their pencil. They wrap more fingers around their pencil to make up for not having enough strength in their hand yet. While they may be able to learn to make the letter shapes with these grasps, they will likely have poor

handwriting and tire more easily, especially when they have to write for longer periods of time.

What can you do at home? Encourage good pencil holding. When you see your child holding their pencil incorrectly, show them the correct way to hold it. Don't give up. They will probably not like this new way of holding their pencil because it requires the use of muscles that they have not yet developed. It will take time to correct.

Develop those hand and finger muscles by doing activities that require squeezing and pinching. Things like working with Play-doh or clay, using stress balls, working clothes pins, and prying apart LEGOs can all help develop the muscles needed for writing.



Kimberly Smith

NISD Dyslexia Specialist



klsmith@nederlandisd.org



(409)722-2391 ext.1241



220 17th Street, Nederland, TX 77627