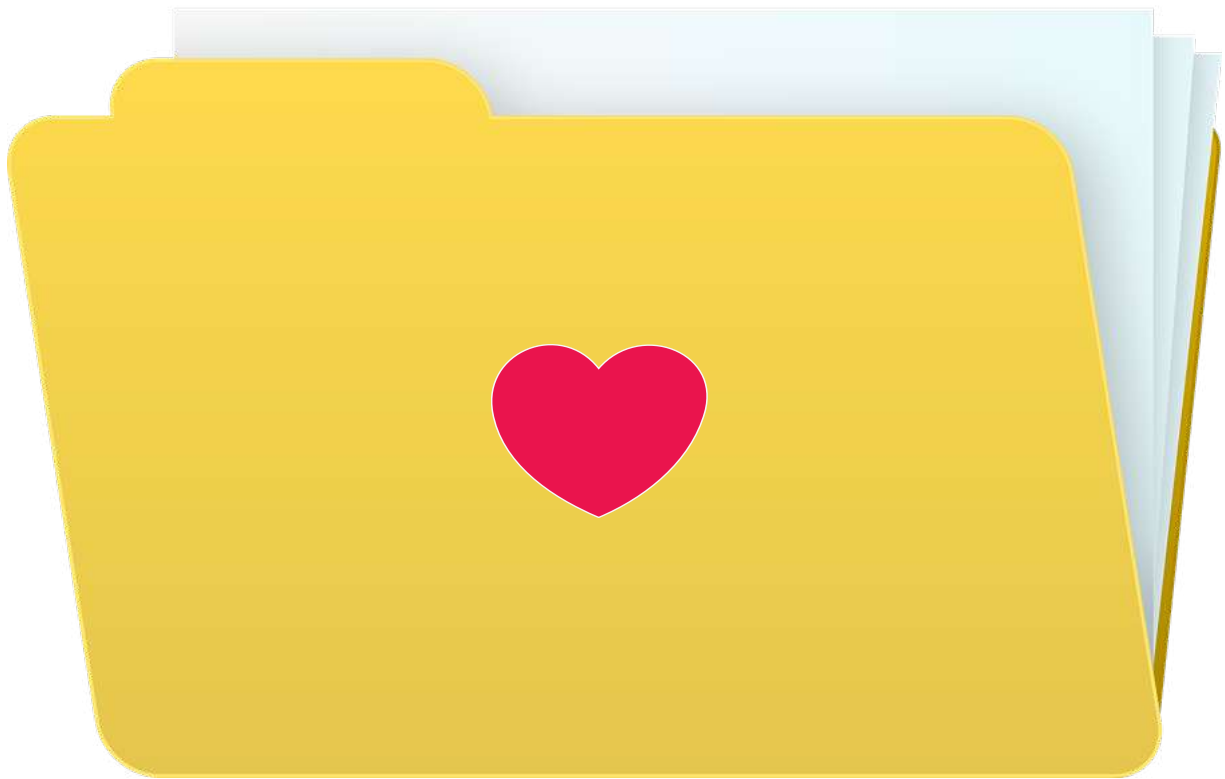


# Dyslexic Advantage

## NEWSLETTER

### DYSLEXIA AND YOUR IEP



- IDEA IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS
- MEDICAL STUDENT HACKS
- ARTSHARE
- NOVELIST NATASHA SOLOMONS
- DYSLEXIA AT WORK
- DYSLEXIA NEWS



Fernette Eide MD, Editor

Dear Friends,

It's IEP season - and if you're still getting things together, here are some helpful tips and resources. Our STEM / STEAM Ingenuity awards deadline is today May 15th!  
- Fernette

Become a **Premium Subscriber** and discover the most comprehensive resource on dyslexia in the world. You can sign up for an individual subscription or gift a school with institutional subscription. Don't forget there is a **Homeschooler's** course for parents and for teachers, a clock hour course that provides professional development credits (**Dyslexia for Teachers**).

The **NEUROLEARNING** Dyslexia Screening App is \$39.99 and available for children and adults 7-70 years old. iPad, iPhone, Android, and Kindle Fire.



The app may be used to identify and qualify for services such as Benetech's huge free library of e-books.

Thank you volunteers Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Dayna Russell Freudenthal, and Michelle Williams for their astute critique and proofing. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for beautiful design and layout.

**PREMIUM**

Editor's Note: to make our publications easier to read, we will avoid use of italics and certain types of fonts.

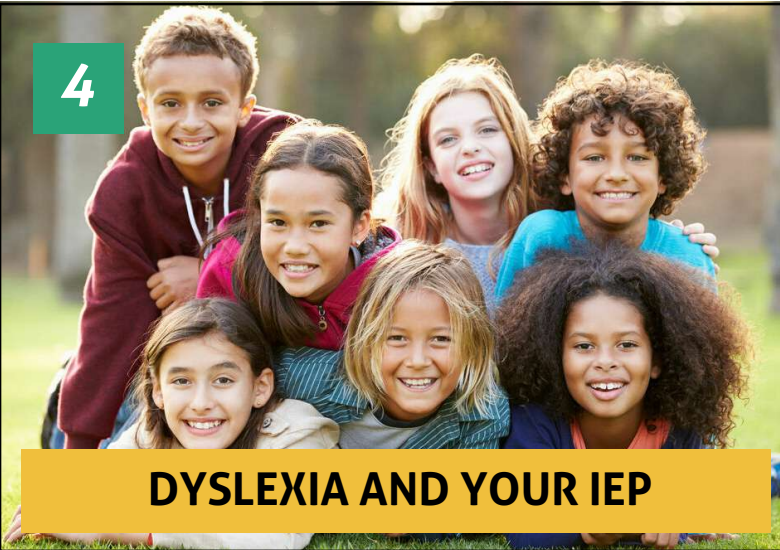
Newsletters can be read online **HERE**. This issue will be available on the Joomag site for 3 months and can also be downloaded as a pdf file.



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# DYSLEXIA AND YOUR IEP



Andrew F. vs. Douglas County School District decision:

"The IEP must aim to enable the child to make progress. After all, the essential function of an IEP is to set out a plan for pursuing academic and functional advancement... When all is said and done, a student offered an educational program providing 'merely more than de minimis' [trivial or minor] progress from year to year can hardly be said to have been offered an education at all.

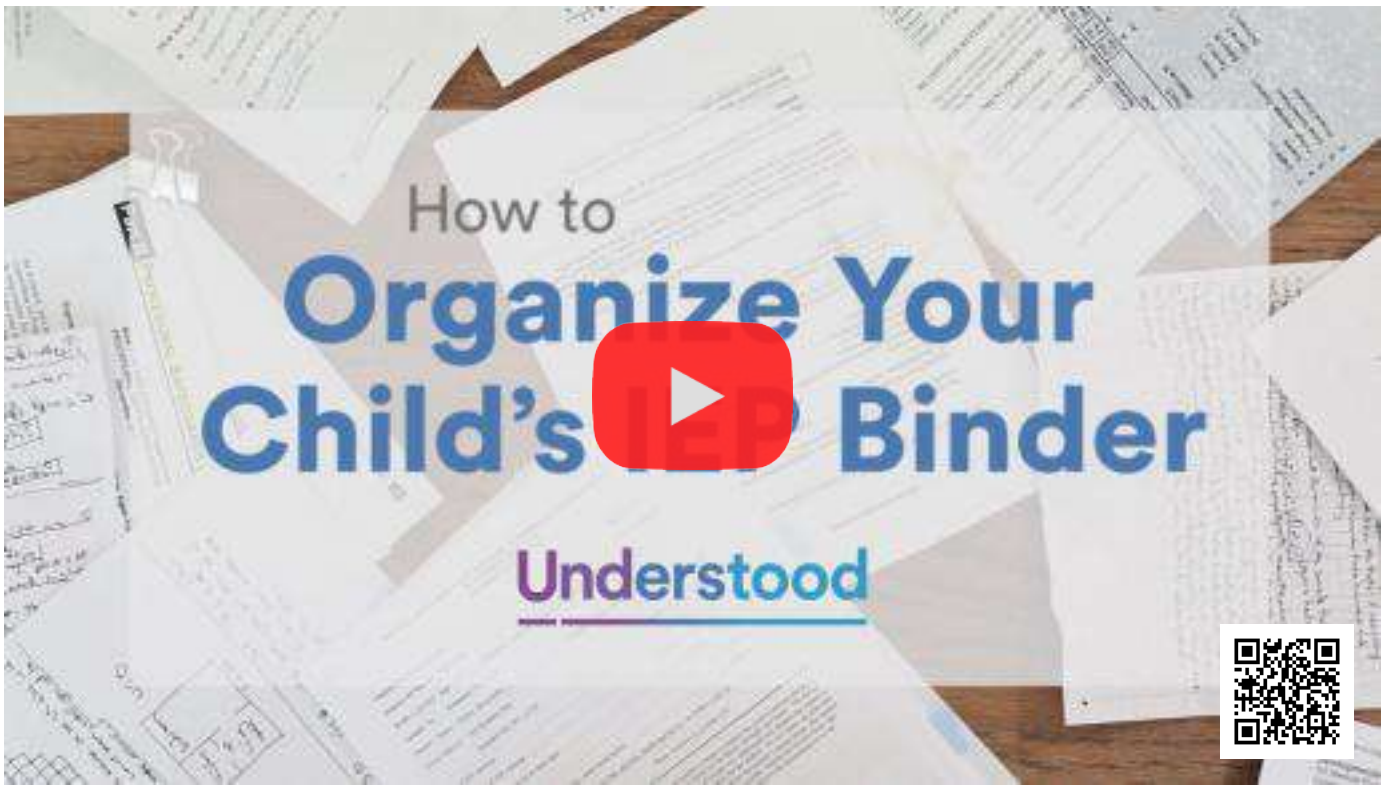
"For children with disabilities, receiving instruction that aims so low would be tantamount to 'sitting idly ... awaiting the time when they were old enough to drop out' ... Every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives."

This is the time of year for IEP meetings.

For parents, the idea is to look over the past school year where progress was and wasn't made, and make plans for the upcoming year to move students even farther along on their journey.

The IEP process is daunting and the better prepared parents are for the meeting, the better. On the opposite page is a nice short video about how to organize an IEP binder.

Children as young as 9 can be involved in the IEP meeting although it is more common to have older students attend. Definitely review materials (progress reports, testing, report cards) and have your own list of strengths, needs, and concerns. Ask if you can record the meeting and get a list of all who will be attending. It is always recommended to have someone attend with you.



If this is your first IEP meeting, see if you can talk to other parents who have had one at your school. You may even be allowed to have another parent attend with you as a person to take notes or provide a more objective viewpoint.

IEP meetings can be an intense experience. Try not to get upset and check out the rules of thumb suggested by [Smart Kids with LD](#).

Be aware that you do not have to sign by the end of the IEP meeting. If you need to take time to consider if the plan is a good fit for your student, and ask for time if you need to consider whether it will be a good plan for the upcoming year. You may need more time to consider and seek out other advice.



### Rules of Thumb

Ideally the questions you ask lead to a conclusion that will ensure your child's success. Below are general guidelines for ensuring a successful meeting:

- Although you may be angry and frustrated, [remain calm and in control at the meeting](#). To do otherwise is likely to provoke a defensive reaction that may not be in your child's best interest.
- Ask questions that focus on the problems and solutions, not on the people.
- To generate new ideas or approaches from other team members, ask questions to which you may know the answers.
- For clarification, paraphrase and restate questions.
- If you do not agree, do not be afraid to ask again in an effort to negotiate an agreement.
- Ask questions to understand the philosophy behind the staff recommendations.
- Ask questions that will lead to your final concern.



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## GOOD IEP STATEMENT EXAMPLES

The focus in an IEP should be on objective facts, not opinions. Check out this [Ultimate IEP Presentation](#) for good examples of "present levels" and "goals":

An excerpt:

### PRESENT LEVEL EXAMPLE

"Jake (a fifth grader) currently reading at 89 CWPM when given an unfamiliar text at the fifth grade level. According to the Woodcock-Johnson, Jake is currently decoding multisyllabic words at the 3rd grade level. His spelling is at the 1st grade level according to the Woodcock-Johnson. Jake struggles to decode new multisyllabic words, especially words that include vowel teams and diphthongs such as retreat and avoided."

### DECODING GOAL

"Amy will be able to decode a list of fifty third grade words (10 CVC, 10 CV, 20 VCE and 10 VT) with 80% accuracy."

### FLUENCY GOAL

"Amy will read an unfamiliar third grade text at 90CWPM 3 out of 4 trials as measured by teacherkept data."

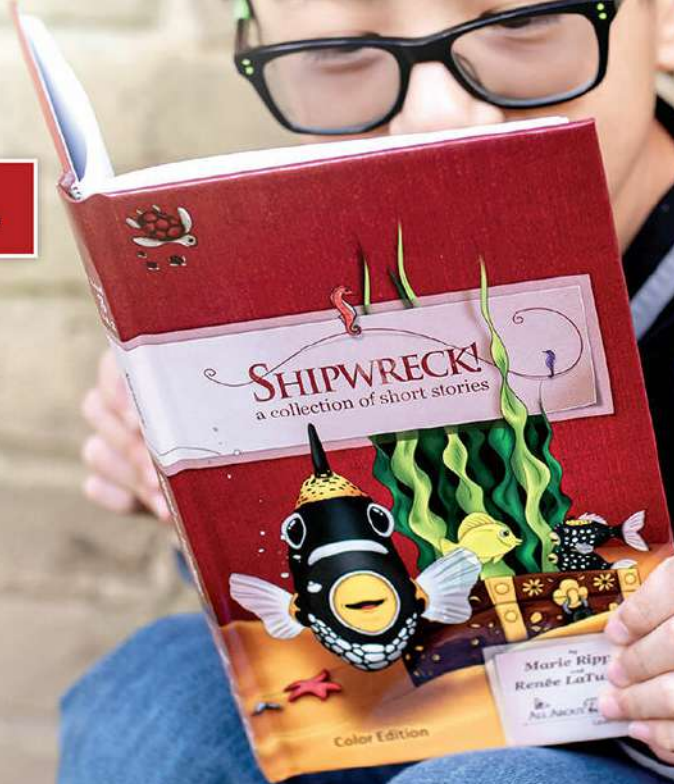
### SPELLING GOAL

"Amy will be able to spell (encode) a list of fifty third grade words (10 CVC, 10 CV, 20 VCE and 10 VT) with 80% accuracy. "



He doesn't want  
to **struggle**  
with **reading**  
and **spelling**.

Now he won't have to.



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# IEP

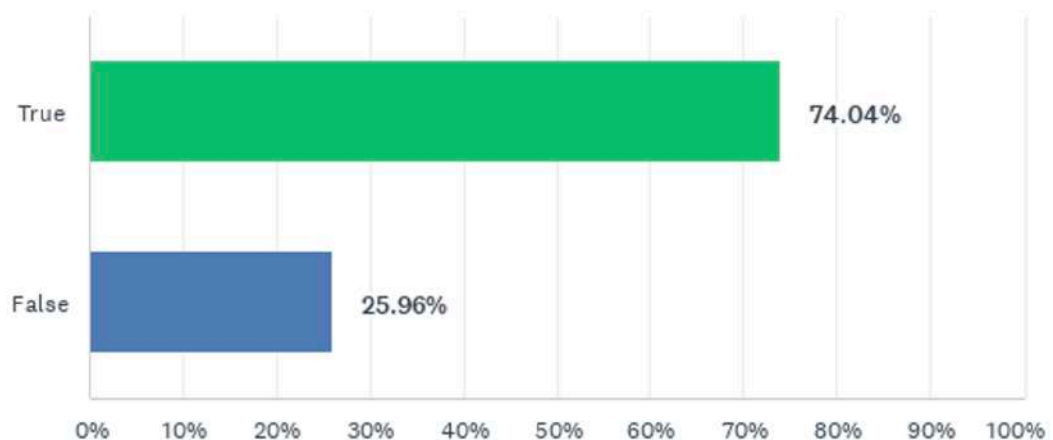
## ACCOMMODATIONS

If your student needs accommodations for classroom work and testing, it is important to have those needs listed in the IEP.

In our Dyslexia at School Survey, a shocking 74% of respondents said that their children were given tests that they could not read.

### Q38: My student was given tests that he/she could not read.

Answered: 3,629



Students need accommodations to read routine classwork and assignments, textbooks and handouts, and of course tests. IEP guidelines usually state that requests do not list specific products that are required, but instead mention the features necessary to help.

If an IEP team, the student, and parents cannot agree on an assistive technology plan, then a formal assistive technology assessment may need to be conducted.

If you would like to provide outside documentation about accommodations for your student with dyslexia here are a two references:

[Assistive Technologies to Support Students with Dyslexia \(paper\)](#)

[Assistive Technology for Students with Dyslexia \(Fairfax County Schools\)](#)

Common accommodations requested include:

Text-to-speech, reader for tests, audiobooks, Bookshare, Learning Ally, audiobooks and ebooks, Rewordify, word prediction software (writing), spellcheck, designated note taker, teacher notes, speech-to-text (dictation), option to keyboard, talking dictionary, 1.5 - 2 x extended time for tests, scribe for scantrons.

### WARNING - DISRUPTIONS DUE TO PANDEMIC EDUCATION LOSS



Be aware that many educational leaders are warning that the identification and remediation of students with disabilities is likely to be complex due to the extent of pandemic learning loss for many students.

From the April issues of [Nature Reviews Psychology](#):

"Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, millions of children across the globe have experienced the partial or full closure of schools and/or prolonged reliance on virtual learning. The effects of this ongoing educational disruption are still unfolding. Early studies from the COVID-19 era have associated educational disruption with increased mental health concerns (including depression and anxiety) and diminished learning gains (especially in maths and reading) in young people. Those affected by racial and economic disadvantages have been more likely to experience longer periods of educational disruption.

During educational disruption, youth with developmental concerns, including learning disorders, have reduced access to special education and other support services....

When education has been disrupted by COVID-19, rigid adherence to DSM-5 criteria for initial diagnosis of a specific learning disorder entails substantial risk of error. In the past two years, most youth have experienced some loss of academic instruction. Many have also experienced psychosocial adversity (such as death of a loved one or decreased social support). Interventions might not have been available within any given six-month span within the pandemic. These factors would seem to rule out the diagnosis of a learning disorder on the basis of

the DSM-5 criteria. As educational disruption persisted, some schools altered the curriculum by eliminating content; consequently, it is increasingly difficult to know whether observed learning difficulties and/or low achievement scores reflect an underlying learning disorder or lack of instruction. This difficulty is confounded if standardized academic assessments use pre-COVID-19 normative data to assess COVID-19 era progress."

All these warnings aside, the difficulties that schools and teachers are currently operating under do not mean that their students can't be provided with appropriate education - it may mean that there may be significant backlogs in testing and services and students and parents may need to advocate for themselves if their needs are overlooked.

State guidelines often determine which curricula can be used for students who are more severely impacted by reading difficulties; however, next steps may get murky if a student fails to respond.

If you have a student who has had trouble making progress with their IEP, then consider if the curriculum that they are being given is a good fit for them.

Can I request an Orton-Gillingham / structured literacy tutor? You can read more about this topic in the Wrightslaw blog [HERE](#). You can request a 1:1 tutor, but the school may not provide one. If your student has had documented difficulties failing to make progress on their curriculum, then you have stronger support to request changes and potentially more support. More districts are acquiring district literacy experts who may be able to make an assessment of your student and their current school program and revise or provide changes that may be needed.

## FINDING AN ADVOCATE

If you find yourself overwhelmed by the IEP process, you might see whether finding a dyslexia / special education advocate could help. There is not an official job or certified position - but many people can be helpful in this role because there are a lot of specific terms and phrases and rules that parents may be unfamiliar with.



Sometimes a parent of an older student can help fill this role; other times it may be a previous teacher your student had that understood his or her needs. Some professionals (teachers, therapists, tutors, therapists, psychologists, etc.) may also have retired full-time from their professions, but still be willing to work as consultants to advise

parents in the IEP / 504 process. Some parent or parent-teacher groups have lists of advocates or advocate training for parents. There are also groups that meet online to share information and resources - they may be through shared interest groups on facebook or community sites associated with non-profits or professionals. One online clearinghouse for the US is the [Center for Parent Information and Resources](#).

### BE CAREFUL ABOUT EXITING AN IEP OR 504

The issues around terminating an IEP or 504 are complex. To read more about others' experiences, visit [HERE](#).

Every new academic year present with new challenges, so if a student is exited at the end of one school year, but then has trouble without the added supports in the following year, and with the usual delays in re-assessing and getting plans approved, months and even a whole year can be lost .

Check out our previous article on the Department of Education and its policy about qualifying for accommodations for high stakes tests [HERE](#). It is true that an IEP and 504 do not exist at the college level, but having accommodations as part of an IEP or 504 (like extended time, text-to-speech, or note taker) are usually automatically rewarded at the college level as well as by exams like the PSAT, SAT, ACT, AP, GED, or licensing exams.

An IEP or 504 does not mean your student needs to have pull out or push in services. It can mainly be used for accommodations and technology.

# NOVELIST NATASHA SOLOMONS

"Books are my refuge, but I had to overcome dyslexia to write the stories I was bursting to tell" -  
**Natasha Solomons**



Natasha is a lifelong storyteller, but it took a lot of persistence and resilience to get those stories out.

As a child, she listened to stories incessantly and her grandfather (also dyslexic) had the foresight to pass on his antique writing desk to her when she was just 10 years "to help her with ambition of becoming a writer."

It would be nearly 20 years later, but Natasha would write a novel at that writing desk that would earn a six-figure advance. Currently she is the author of 8 novels.

She recently wrote a poignant article for [The Guardian](#).

An excerpt:

"...stories were always my refuge. I learned to live in them and gradually I began to construct my own worlds to escape into. It wasn't easy. My reading was poor and my writing worse. Often when I sought to connect, the hopeless inadequacy of my dyslexia-riddled writing ensured that no one could read what I'd attempted...Yet somehow, another notebook would find its way into my hands. I couldn't stop. The compulsion to escape into stories was absolute and to write for myself was not enough..."

## Helping Children, Teens, Adults, and Families Realize Their Potential

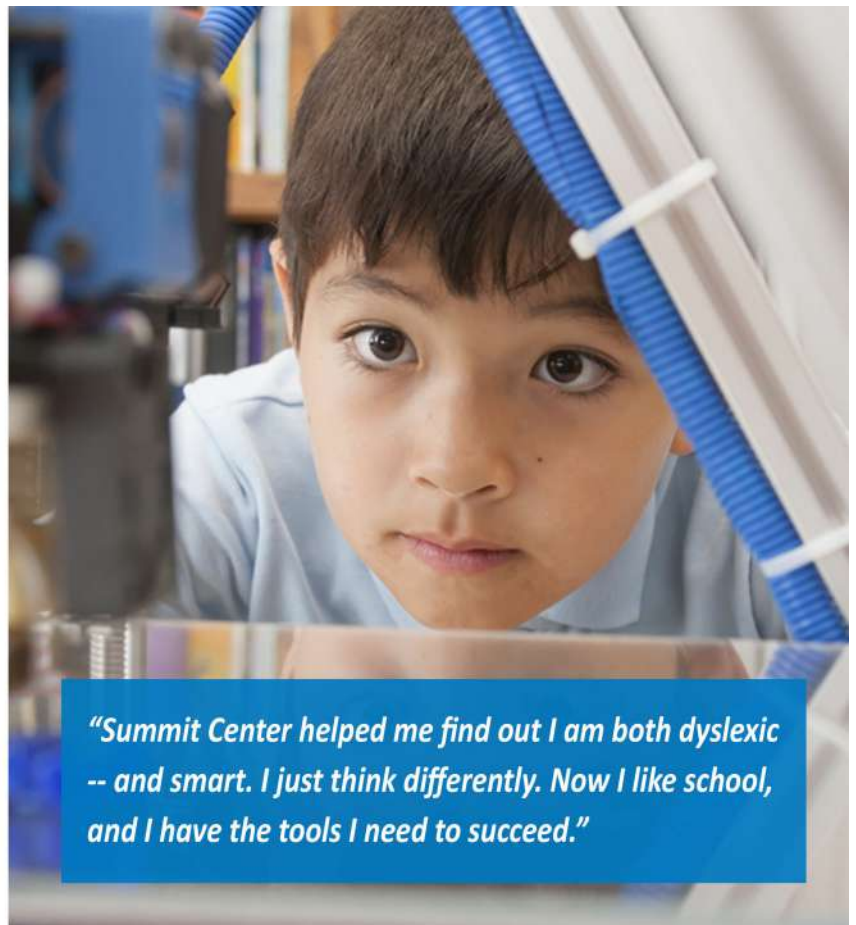
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Register at:  
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## INSPIRATION

...I moved to Glasgow to study for a PhD and there I met my first professional writer. A screenwriter, David. I showed him a novel I'd been writing. He was kind, but told me it was hopelessly flawed. I cried until my eyelids bruised. Then I sat down and began another. Twenty drafts and some years later that book was published. I married the screenwriter. When you find someone who gives notes that good, you hang on to them.

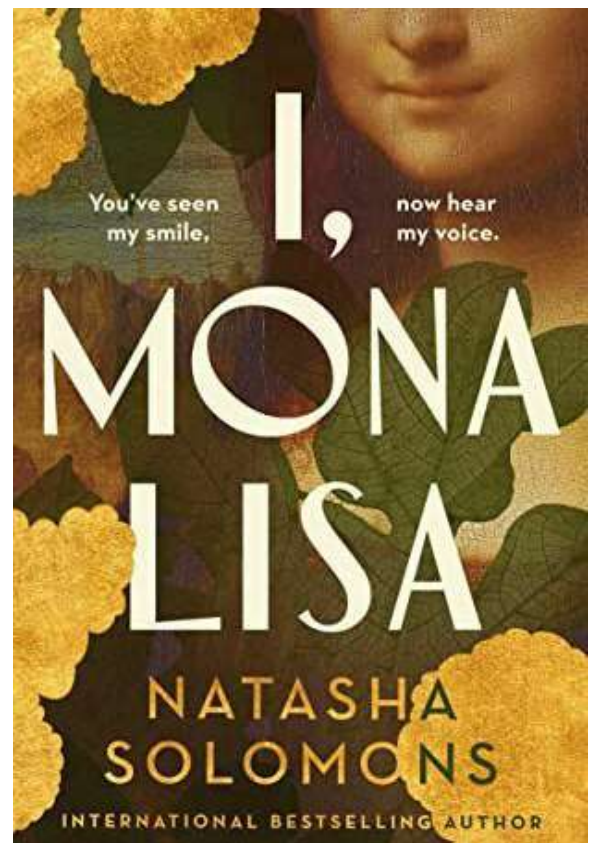
Since then, I have lived two lives at once: one in the real world and the other in my imagination. I am happiest at my desk in my study looking out across the hill, although honestly I'm not really there at all. I'm in Italy, I'm 100 years ago, I'm 1,000 years ago, I'm tomorrow..."

The subjects of Natasha's novels are interesting blend of the personal and imaginative meanderings. Her first novel, [Mr Rosenblum's Dreams](#) was loosely inspired by her immigrant parents escape from Nazi Germany to make a life for themselves in England. Jacob renames himself Jack and sets out to become a proper English gentleman, while his wife is skeptical and wants to not forget their past and who they are.

In her most recent book, Natasha takes on the voice of [Mona Lisa](#).

From the description:

"A tour de force of historical recreation ranging over centuries, Solomons' sweeping novel gives the subject of Leonardo da Vinci's iconic painting a voice for the first time as Lisa del Giocondo recounts an incredible journey from Renaissance Florence to the turbulent twentieth century and beyond."



# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ISSUES LETTER ON IDEA AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Under the IDEA or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a free and appropriate public education (or FAPE) is granted to eligible students with disabilities. In schools, a lot of the funding for special education and additional resources is provided under funds from the IDEA.

Recently, the Department of Education published a Q & A document specifying rights for children with disabilities placed by their parents into private schools. To read the document directly, click [HERE](#).

The document may be valuable for students who have been placed into private schools in order to obtain a free and appropriate education. For instance, if a student with significant challenges due to dyslexia was enrolled in a private school by their public school district in order to provide them with an appropriate education, that student would still be eligible for some services; but this document also clarifies that they may not be eligible for the full range of services that could be offered if they had remained full time in public school.

Page 34 of the document discusses homeschooled children with disabilities.

Excerpt: "Whether home-schooled children with disabilities are considered parentally-placed private school children with disabilities is determined under State law. If the State recognizes home schools as private elementary schools and secondary schools, children with disabilities in those home schools must be treated in the same way as other parentally-placed private school children with disabilities..." The document also discusses funded school choice vouchers or scholarships. What this may mean is that some families may be eligible for free special education or therapy supports for the public school system - but how easy or hard this is to obtain may depend on individual schools and waitlists.



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National Center for Learning Disabilities, the International Dyslexia Association have evaluated the Sondag System(r) and deemed that the program contained the required elements for teaching reading identified by the Nation Reading Panel.

# LEARNING FROM LOCKDOWN: DYSLEXIC MEDICAL STUDENTS

**"The learning experiences of dyslexic medical students during the COVID-19 pandemic: a phenomenological study. This study has explored the learning experiences of dyslexic medical students during the COVID-19 pandemic...Generally, it fostered a culture of togetherness and allowed them greater flexibility in their learning—giving them the opportunity to overcome the difficulties associated with their dyslexia."- Shaw et al., 2022**



It's always interesting comparing the research in the UK vs. the United States. Here in the US, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on early identification - often before children are even old enough to read. In the US, also, the overwhelming emphasis is on reading, although dyslexia impacts many aspects of general learning, school, and work performance.

I was happy therefore to see this recent paper by Shaw and colleagues following up on the learning experiences of dyslexic medical students in the midst of the COVID pandemic lockdowns. The study population is small, but any information is valuable when there is little otherwise to guide advice.

The first big surprise to the authors of this study was that in general, dyslexic students found the switch to distance learning a positive experience. With all lectures recorded and no longer the requirement for 1st and 2nd year students to be sitting in lecture halls all day, students found their learning more flexible, efficient, and enjoyable. In addition, study partners helped making learning enjoyable and productive.



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## DISTANCE LEARNING

Excerpt: "All participants expressed a sense of taking back control of their education—from self-study to self-timetabling... 'I am really enjoying it... because I can't sit still in lectures—I get really, really bored... I, umm, have really enjoyed being able to do a lot of it online and being able to pause and make a cup of tea, for example, and then carry on.'" P3 felt particularly strongly that this had been the best period of his degree: "I've enjoyed it actually much more... This new layout (distance learning) has felt like it's been my optimal thing." This positive experience was shared with P2, who felt that "it was a much better learning experience—less stressful, and actually much more fun."

Students enjoyed:

- recorded lectures (option to re-listen at custom speeds)
- online question banks to study
- electronic flashcard software
- video instruction for anatomy
- study buddy via Facetime
- flexibility of being able study at home instead of at school
- option to structure studying
- less stress if missing a study section
- less pressure at learning in a specific period of time in class
- typed closed captions to videos
- inclusive options added to exams
- ability to adjust sizes and colors and fonts, and cross out answers

Students commented on the inefficiency of standard medical school lectures, some of which were 3 hrs in length.

On the downside, were impacts of the pandemic that affected all students - namely the sharp restriction in clinical experiences. Clinical electives and even volunteer clinical experiences were shut down because of the pandemic - and students recognized the limitations. Also students commented on technology limitations that were especially frustrating online tests requiring short essays; the required platform apparently only allowed students to see only a few words at a time when they typed answers in a box.



## Use ESSER Funds to Improve Literacy Outcomes With the ReaderPen™



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# ACCOMMODATIONS AT WORK?



**Q: My work is increasingly requiring writing and I find myself getting in trouble because of mistakes. I have not formally been diagnosed, but am thinking that it might help me do an even better at my job. What advice do you have?**

**A:** Based on what you've said, I'm not sure whether your writing difficulties occur mainly when typing or writing by hand.

If typing or keyboarding, then I would recommend adding the free version of [Grammarly](#) to your computer. It will catch errors in punctuation, missing spaces, spelling mistakes, and more. This is something you can do that doesn't require any intervention or work accommodation. You can also use a speech-to-text program to read what you've written back to you in order to catch mistakes.

If you write by hand and have spelling difficulties, then develop a regular routine of using Google to look up correct spellings of words (or another assistant like Siri) or app such as [Easy Spelling Aid](#).



These changes do not require testing or disclosure, but if you feel as if testing would benefit you in understanding yourself better, there are learning specialists (often psychologists) who test adults and who could test you. If your issue is more writing by hand, then an occupational therapist may be appropriate for testing. Dyslexia can be associated with a wide range of challenges that can affect writing, including certain aspects of grammar, spelling, and proofreading.

If you work for a large company, there may be free resources available for assessment, technology, and technology training; but some employees may want to avoid disclosing to managers. There are legal protections against discrimination, but there are also gray areas that exist and it is possible that disclosure could have negative consequences at work.

Another general resources that is free for those in the US is [AskJan.org](https://www.askjan.org). Their phone number is: 1-800-526-7234.

Before the pandemic, we also heard that local Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation could be helpful; they had closed to in-person services, during the pandemic but now they are back open. They may have some free funds to help with assessment and or training for people under their disabilities program.

# DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE PREMIUM SUBSCRIPTION



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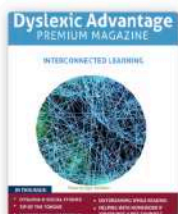
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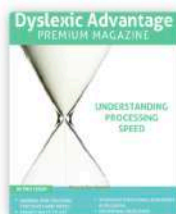
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## DYSLEXIA NEWS



### **Working Together to Redefine Dyslexia**

**Richard Branson at Virgin.com**



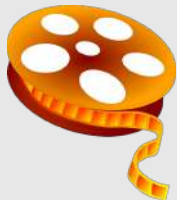
### **New York Announces Sweeping Changes to Support Kids with Dyslexia**

**NY Daily News**



### **Supporting Neurodifferences at Work**

**SOM Occupational Interest Group**



### **17 Celebrities Talk About Their Dyslexia**

**Women's Health**



### **7x World Champion Formula 1 Racer Lewis Hamilton on his Dyslexia**

**Essentially Sports**



### **When To Be Concerned About a Struggling Reader**

**US News and World Report**

PREMIUM ISSUE SEVENTY-FIVE MARCH 2022

# Dyslexic Advantage

## PREMIUM MAGAZINE

HOW FAMILIES HELP



- FROM HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT TO ENGINEERING VP
- TACKLING HIGHER MATH
- IF YOUR STUDENT CAN'T WRITE
- ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES - SCHOOL & WORK

# PREMIUM



## APRIL 2022 ISSUE

- How Families Help
- High School Drop Out to Engineering VP
- Tackling Higher Math
- If Your Student Can't Write
- Assessing Knowledge and Abilities: School and Work

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PREMIUM ISSUE SEVENTY-EIGHT JUNE 2022

## Dyslexic Advantage PREMIUM MAGAZINE



### TAMING THE MONKEY MIND

- GRIT AND RESILIENCE
- POOR OUTCOMES LONG TERM OUTCOMES READING RECOVERY
- ROGUE HERO SAS FOUNDER DAVID STIRLING
- MANAGING MATH
- PAUSING WHILE WRITING

## PREMIUM



- Taming the Monkey Mind
- Grit and Resilience
- Founder of the Special Air Service
- Reading Recovery Curriculum
- Managing Math
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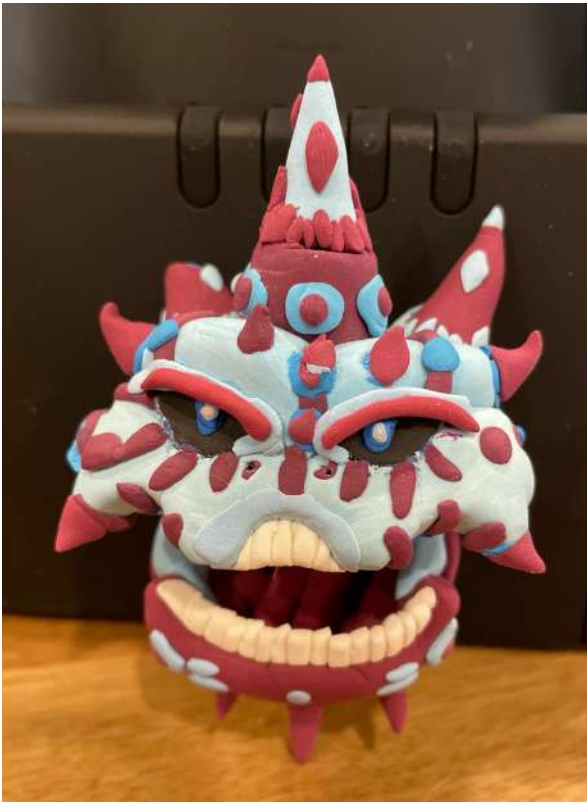
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## Congratulations to ARTSHARE Winner Wyatt!



Wyatt, 12. Winston Center. WA.

This sculpture was inspired by "Mega Glaglie" Pokemon.

What a talented artist! Ferocious expression! AMAZING.

Do you have some art to share? Click **HERE**.



"I feel like people are expecting me to fail, therefore, I expect myself to win." - Lewis Hamilton