

Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER

TOYMAKERS AND GAME MAKERS



- DYSLEXIA WARS: DEFINING DYSLEXIA
- HOW I'M USING AI & CHATGPT
- DYSGRAPHIA AND DYSLEXIA

- DAILY THINKER CALENDAR ❤️ FUNDRAISER
- CREATIVE WRITING DA AT STOW LIBRARY



Winston In College
Academic Support Anywhere



Dr. Fernette Eide
Editor-in-Chief



Dyslexic Advantage Friends, Happy Holidays to All! Thank you for being part of this wonderful community.

We're excited to announce our **FREE FOR SCHOOLS Premium** promotion for the 2023-24 school year to help teachers support their students. If you are able to support us in this effort, please do **HERE**. We have added costs to upgrade our platform for the increases in traffic and there's never been a more important time for students to recognize their strengths and to be guided by teachers who are aware of strength-based teaching.

Check out our innovative AI-powered audio search **dyslexia guides** for dyslexia and college, math, gifted, and executive function and attention.

The link for this issue is: <https://joom.ag/RWnd>

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DYSLEXIC
ADVANTAGE

The **NEUROLEARNING** Dyslexia Screening App is \$79.99 and available for children and adults 7-70 years old. iPad, iPhone, Android, and Kindle Fire.



PREMIUM

The app may qualify for services such as Benetech's huge free library of e-books. Bulk discounts available for higher ed.

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

Thanks to Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Michelle Williams, Cheryl Kahn, and Jack Martin. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for design and layout and Andi and Freshea for their social media and admin help!

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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DYSLEXIC TOYMAKERS AND GAMEMAKERS

Many dyslexic kids and adults are great at games - all sorts of games. Not surprisingly, some decide to make games themselves and then some choose careers in some aspect of the game industry.

There may be an ability to see game play from multiple perspectives including different points of view, while those who win these games are often good at strategy, role play, and pattern recognition. Among game creators, strengths in humor, and divergent and playful thinking are very well-suited to inventing new games.

Some years ago, legendary toy inventor Howard Wexler gave our community a webinar about his life inventing toys. As a kid, he played with tinkertoys and enjoyed taking things apart.

His toys and games were very different from each other, reflecting his very creative mind.

For example, some of his earliest games involved a James Bond character where players had to undertake challenges. Another was a visual perception game, and another, a "psych-out" game called Black and Blue.

Some of his most successful toys were early childhood toys for Captain Kangaroo (parents do you remember that show?) and Connect Four which is known around the world and has many variations. He's licensed over 120 games over his career.

Howard's journey in life was truly remarkable. For the full story, listen to the webinar, but otherwise, here's a short excerpt:

"I was really as bad as anybody could be. As a student, I was raised in a tenement building on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. No one in my family ever graduated from high school. And my family was not concerned. really about education..."



Dyslexic Toy Inventor Howard Wexler Creativity and Invention



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teachers treated me as just a kid with lots of problems. You know, I couldn't read, couldn't write well, I couldn't do arithmetic. And I did everything I could to get out of school. And so when I look at my elementary school days, and my junior high school days, I didn't really learn much at all."

What turned Howard around in junior high was getting involved in intramural sports. He worked hard at sports and found out he could do well. It was there that he began having "smarter friends" and they motivated him to study harder. They were planning to go to college and he wanted to go, too.

He couldn't get into the same colleges as his high school friends, but he could go to night school at city college, and that was what he did. Because his spelling was so bad, he would get by in written tests by writing the first two letters and last two letters of words down clearly. At the college level, Howard found, his teachers were mainly concerned with his ideas and thinking, and his ideas and thinking were good.

INSPIRATION

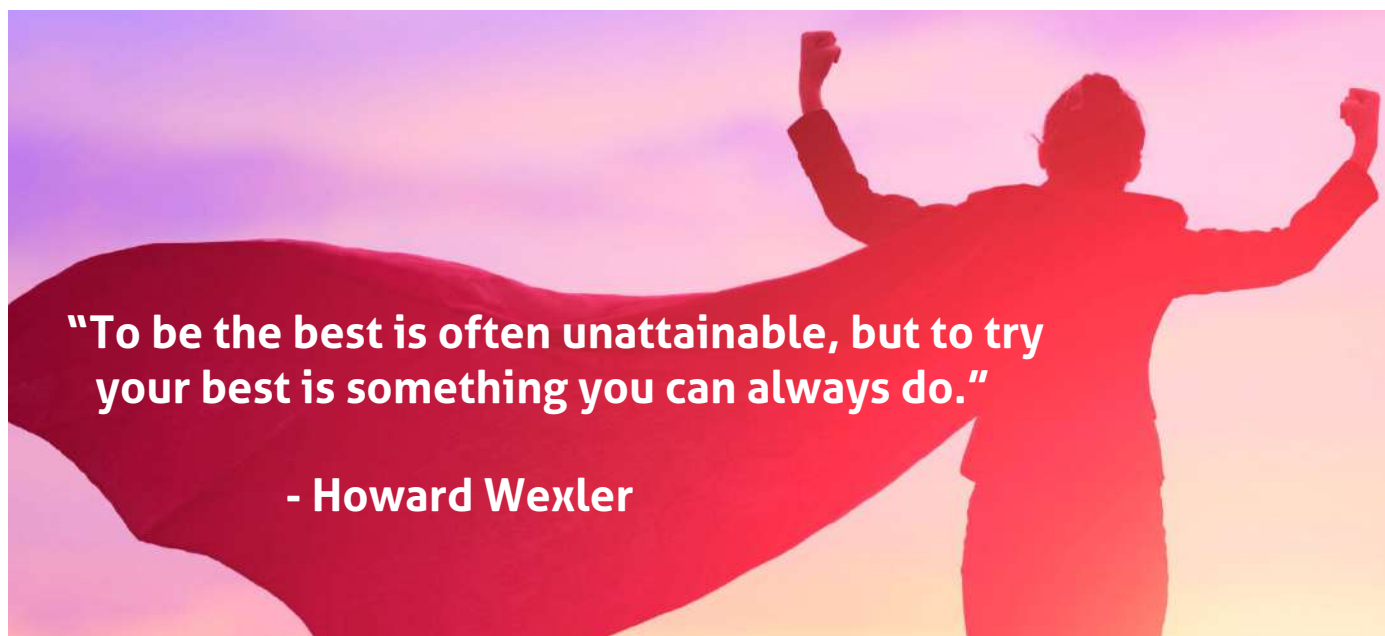
"I pride myself in inventing this kind of idiot writing...this is what I had to do to survive." - Howard Wexler

Howard not only graduated from college, but he also got a PhD in psychology and that led to his pioneering inventions of activity toys for babies and preschoolers for Hasbro. Up until this time, the only toys for babies were crib mobiles. Howard invented toys for different stages of development that included shakers, an interchangeable crib activity gym, busy box, teethingers, soft blocks, curiosity boxes, and simple musical instruments and push and pounding toys.

Howard never had to worry about running out of ideas. If he got a call from Hasbro, Mattell, or Fisher Price saying that they would be visiting New York in two weeks - and asking if he had anything to show them, he would always say yes, even if he didn't have anything new at the time. Within two weeks, he would have a half a dozen working prototypes of games or toys to show them by the time they arrived.

Later on, Howard went on to teach courses on creative entrepreneurship to high school and college students.

In terms of advice, Howard is a big believe in trying, and to not be afraid to admit failure...and then try something new.



"To be the best is often unattainable, but to try your best is something you can always do."

- Howard Wexler

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- Sarah Cronin, Program Lead for Special Education

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SCAN OR CLICK

INSPIRATION

There are many accomplished toymakers who are also dyslexic. One who is also a serial entrepreneur is Reyn Guyer.

Reyn Guyer is dyslexic and comes from a "family of dyslexics." Like Howard, he is a Toy Hall of Famer, having come up with many different toy and game ideas, like the Nerf ball and the party game Twister. Along with other family members, he also launched a music and educational company.

Many dyslexic inventors and innovators have interests and talents that cross many areas; many also have a keen self-awareness to hire to make up for what they may lack and to also spot talent, even if it's in its raw form...these can come together to make great startup companies.

To read more about how Reyn put together his early game company visit [this link](#).

The idea for foam balls came when one of their members started throwing foam rocks around at each other. Recalled Reyn, "We had inadvertently created the world's first indoor ball and broken the parental rule of 'no throwing balls in the house.'"

The breakthrough was not just that throwing pieces of foam at each other could be a fun thing to do, but that there was no product in the toy market that was using foam balls and that the marketing pitch could be commercially successful.

Reyn and his group were also smart enough to not be dissuaded after Milton Bradley, the company that bought their Twister game, told them they weren't interested in adding a foam ball to their game and puzzle products. They went to Parker Brothers and that was where he would eventually sign an exclusive contract.

GAME MAKERS - GAME PLAYERS

Having married into a family of avid game players and also having a background in cognitive neuroscience, I've definitely grown in my appreciation of game playing and the skills that can come from it.

Young children can be remarkably good at games that older folks can be mediocre or poor at - and it is nice to celebrate their ingenuity and talents outside the classroom.

Sometimes games provide an outlet for complexity and fun that kids may crave. Sometimes this may lead to their becoming interested in learning coding or more generally, technology.

If you are brooding over which games are right for dyslexic kids - there are few ways to go wrong (except if it requires a lot of spelling - like Scrabble). Strategy-loving kids like classic games like [Risk](#), whereas others may prefer [Settlers of Catan](#) or even one of the [Monopoly](#) games for budding entrepreneurs.

Creative families and friends also have lots of fun social games to consider - like [Apples to Apples](#) or [Cranium](#) or [Pictionary](#).

There are also lots of deductive reasoning games (the [Clue](#) games, for instance) as well as those that involve building like [Jenga](#) or patterns like Howard's [Connect4](#) or if physical play is what you like to do when you get together with family, then there's a lot of toys based on Reyn's [Nerf](#).

When Reyn was asked about the key to his life's success inventing games, he said it came down to 3 words: "What happens if..." Too often ideas come into mind, but the inventing stops there, but it shouldn't.

**"Don't sit around and talk about it.
Make one, do it." - Reyn Guyer**



DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE at STOW LIBRARY IN MA



Tina McAndrew
Director Randall
Stow Library

Dyslexic Together



Scott Cummings



Last week, Brock and I gave a presentation on the Strengths of Dyslexia at the Randall Library in Stow, Massachusetts via Zoom.

Tina McAndrew, director of the Randall Library, got the idea to apply for a grant from the American Libraries Association after speaking to Scott Cummings, a library patron who was amazed by the audio and other resources available after he contacted her. One of the first audiobooks he listened to with the Libby App was our book, *The Dyslexic Advantage*.

Imagine how positive dyslexia awareness could be transformed if every library had a strengths-focused dyslexia event!

Although libraries in many ways are an ideal place to spread dyslexia awareness (they have many free educational and community resources, many have free tutoring programs), many dyslexic families may not know about all that they offer.

The beautiful thing about helping librarians learn about *Dyslexic Advantage* and its resources, is that they are on the front lines helping people find information and helping to connect them valuable resources.

The grant that the Stow Library received was the Libraries Transforming Communities Grant. [Bring Dyslexic Advantage to your library or school.](#)



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WRITING

GETTING YOUR STUDENT STARTED IN CREATIVE WRITING

With all the work of school and physical challenges getting information down on paper, many students with dyslexia don't get a chance to write creatively - but the Karina Eide Young Writers Awards might get some students off the sidelines.

The deadline for the awards is Valentine's Day or February 14th.

Submissions must be creative and not a book report or factual description of an event. Stories or poems should be 7-700 words only and only 1 work should be submitted. Works can be dictated to parent, teacher, or friend. Spelling does not count in judging.

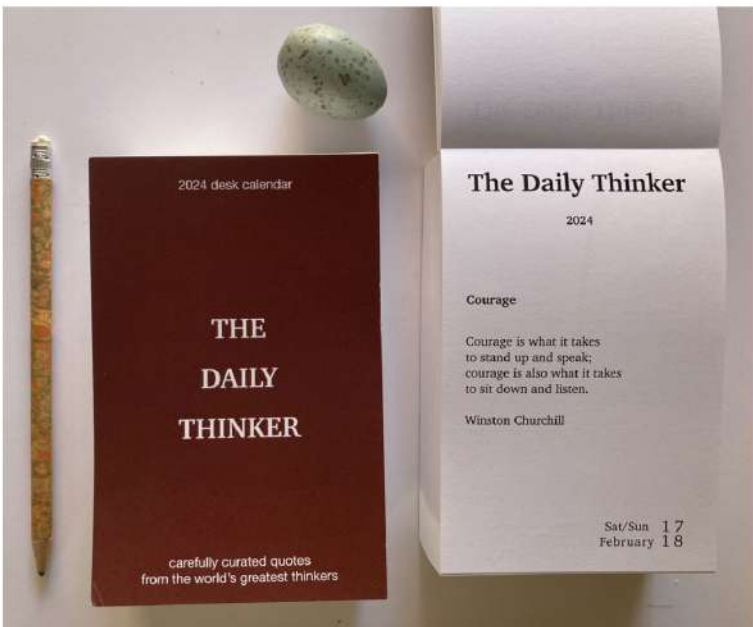
Your dictionary has some easy tips for students who want to write a poem [here](#).

Looking at examples of poems or stories is always a good idea. What did you like most about the story? What did you like least? Could you write it on a different theme or write it with a sense of humor?

For older students, here is video with some ideas for writing when you don't have any ideas.

If you have a visual thinker, they can draw pictures first, then add words at a second step or look for an interesting picture or use a [visual story prompt](#) to get the creative juices flowing.





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Philip Schultz is a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who is also dyslexic. The school that he founded with Monica Banks has guided students who have won the most prestigious prizes in creative writing!



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COMPLETING MY DEGREE WITH AI AND CHAT GPT

Recently, I spoke with dyslexic entrepreneur Stan Gloss, who returned to higher education to finish a degree in Educational Leadership. Stan's full interview will be featured in an upcoming issue in our [Premium](#) magazine.

What Stan shares is his workflow for conducting research and writing his dissertation for his degree.

Because of the text-based burdens of researching and writing a dissertation, many dyslexic students may find themselves halted in "ABD" or All But the Dissertation limbo. Stan found an answer to this and won his university's approval to use these technologies in his graduate work.

Entrepreneur Stan Gloss

DYSLEXIA IN HIGHER ED:
USING AI and CHAT GPT
TO FINISH YOUR DEGREE

Interviewed by Dr. Farnette Eide

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NeuroLearning

Understanding Your Dyslexia Subscale Score:

ALL SCORE RANGES ARE 1-10. SCORES 7+ INDICATE GREATER DYSLLEXIA RISK OR READING CHALLENGES.



YOUR SCORE: 7 AVERAGE-SUBSCALE: 6

The radar graph of your scores provides a quick overview of your Dyslexia Subscale Scores.

The further a particular score is from the center of the graph, the greater the likelihood it represents a dyslexia-associated processing trait.

Foundation Scores
These are low-level processing skills underlying reading and spelling.

- Subword Processing: 8**
Measures your brain's ability to break apart, identify, and manipulate sound components that make up words.
- Working Memory: 10**
Measures the amount of auditory-verbal info your brain can actively process at one time.
- Naming Speed: 8**
Measures the speed at which your brain can recall words from memory in response to visual symbols.
- Visual Attention: 6**
Measures how well your eyes and brain cooperate to gather accurate information about printed symbols.

Achievement Scores
These are learned reading skills.

- Word-Level Reading: 9**
Measures your ability to recognize (or 'sight read') and decode words.
- Passage-Level Reading: 10**
Measures your ability to read and understand longer passages of text.
- Reading Speed: 10**
Measures the speed which you read sentences and paragraphs.
- Vocabulary: 7**
Scores 7 and higher can increase reading problems.

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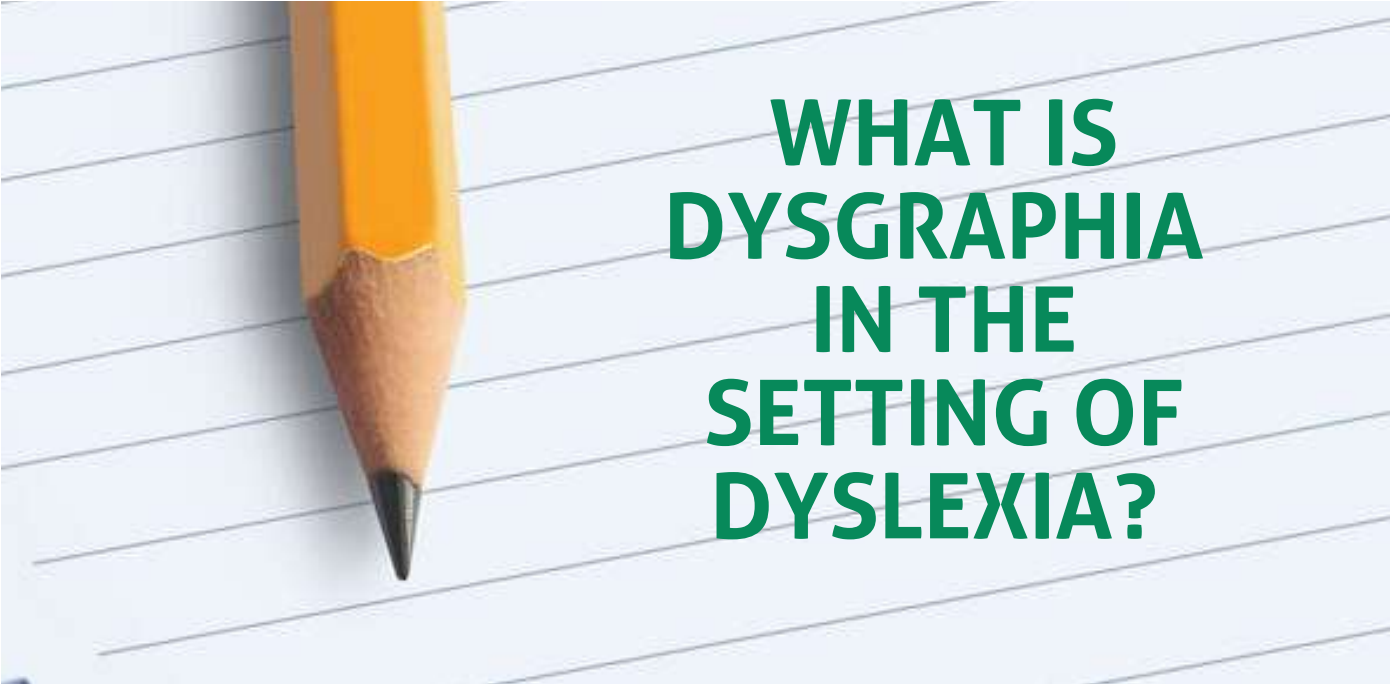
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WHAT IS DYSGRAPHIA IN THE SETTING OF DYSLEXIA?

When I saw the title of a new research paper on the indicators of dyslexia and dysgraphia in children's writing, I looked forward to seeing what it contained.

The paper is available online [here](#), but the checklist contained in the paper falls short, and at least in its present form, I would not recommend it because it does not seem to reflect a full understanding of dyslexia. A much better (though older) paper is one by [Crouch and Jakubecy \(2007\)](#). This paper doesn't miss the importance of automaticity (or lack of automaticity) in dysgraphia..

IMPAIRED AUTOMATICITY IN DYSGRAPHIA

Many dyslexic (and non-dyslexic) students with dysgraphia have significant impairments in handwriting automaticity. What that means is that when letters are formed, there is not a regular 'template' to recall letters. If you look at a commonly written letter like the letter "e" or "a", individuals with impaired automaticity will show great variation in how they write the same letter.

When writing is not automatic, students have to consciously think about the twists and turns of the pencil when they write. Some students will have to visually monitor what ways their pencil turns while writing letters. The conscious aspect of handwriting swamps working memory and easily contributes to losing ones place.

DYSGRAPHIA - WRITING

Impaired automaticity may improve with development or persist into adulthood. Occupational therapy may be able to help and but many with moderate to severe impaired automaticity will likely also prefer typing to writing by hand.

Individuals with impaired automaticity will almost always require extra time and an option to keyboard work. Writing will take longer for everything - not just essay writing. Accommodations should also be in place for math work and science - especially when having to work through problems like balancing equations.

It is common for dysgraphia accommodations to be overlooked - with students being penalized for "sloppy" or "illegible" handwriting. Unaddressed dysgraphia can take a tremendous emotional toll on students - so parents and teachers should be be vigilant for the need.

WRITING IS DIFFICULT - UNDERSTAND WHY PATTERNS OCCUR AND FOCUS ONE THING AT A TIME

Writing is often the hardest thing you can ask a dyslexic student to do. Writing places great demands on letter formation (reversals, impaired automaticity, phonology, orthography / spelling, sequencing, and executive function).

When working 1:1 with a student, checklists aren't very helpful.

Giving a student a voice is more important than marking up the paper of a very dysgraphic student. Empathy and recognition of the difficulty of writing can go a long way - that and trying troubleshoot ways to make writing easier. Non-writers should be given options to dictate.

Assistive technology should be used to increase both the length and quality of writing. Students should be able to look up words they don't know how to spell (Google words or use a spelling program like [Easy Spelling Aid](#)) and writing using word prediction software ([Co:writer](#)) with spellcheck and grammar check (like [Grammarly](#)).

Teachers and parents should be careful about not demanding more than students can realistically produce at that point in their development. Writing is late blooming.

FREE TEACHER RESOURCES!



Are you a teacher who needs more practical information about dyslexia and strength-based strategies to teach them?

Dyslexic Advantage is piloting a new program providing free access to all of our informational articles for one year. If you are a public or private school teacher (independent, religious), you are eligible for the program.

Take a brief survey here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/teachers-free>

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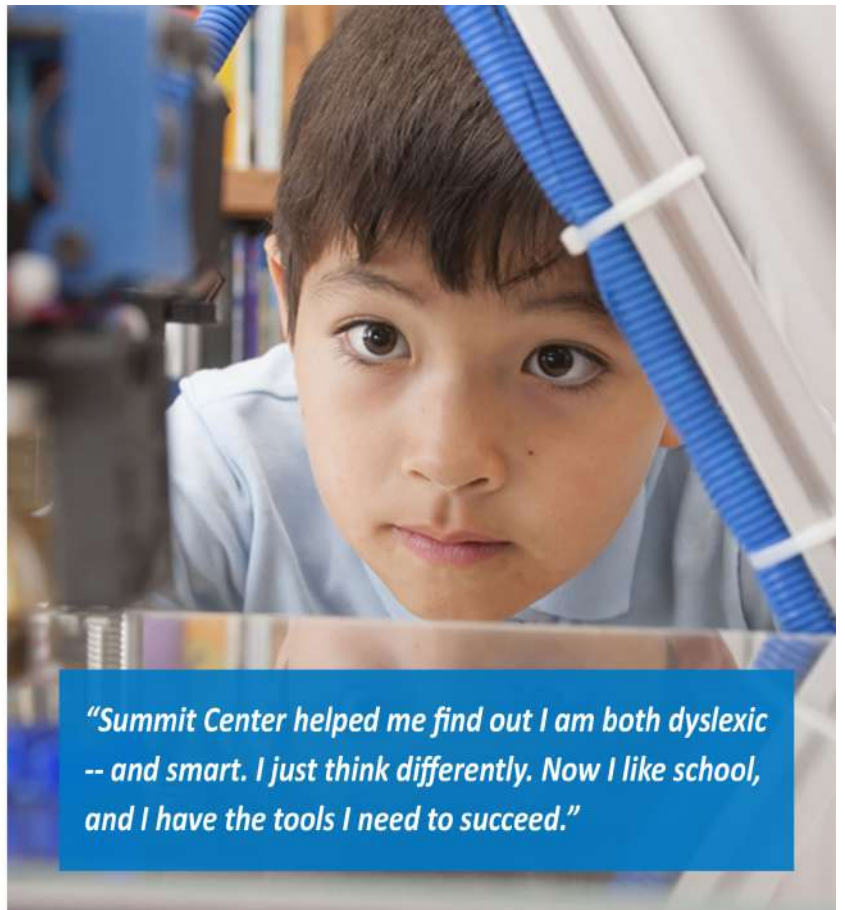
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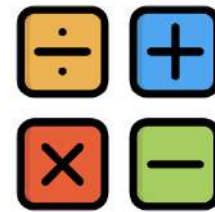
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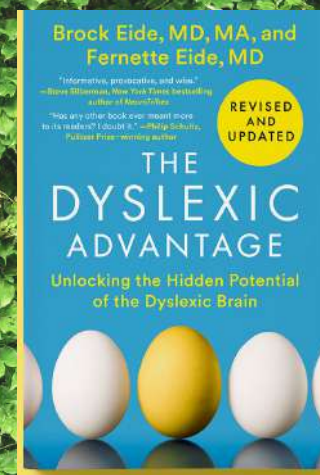
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**BRING DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE
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STRENGTHS OF THE DYSLEXIC MIND

Drs. Brock and Fernette Eide can also include a Q & A with parents and teachers.



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- Spotting Trends/ Making Predictions
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DYSLEXIA WARS: ATTACK ON DYSLEXIA DEFINITION

By Fernette Eide

A brief note about about an article in Hechringer Report (also published in Scientific America). It is attacking the "unexpected" difficulty in reading (in the presence of average or above-average IQ) that has been a part of the dyslexia definition since its first clinical description in the late 1800's as well as documented through scientific research since that time. I am opting not to share the link, because controversial articles such as these can attract "clicks" and that are credited in a positive way to the author and site, though contibuting actual harm to students through misleading selective presentation of data use of emotionally-charged words.

The title of the article is: "How a disgraced method of diagnosing learning disabilities persists in our nation's schools." The article leads with a Tennessee professor whose dyslexia was not diagnosed when he was a child because his IQ did not meet the cut-off for discrepancy required at the time. The article also throws its support behind RTI (Response to Intervention), which has been shown in an IES study to worsen the reading outcomes of students with specific learning disabilities (read more [here](#)). Dr. Sally Shaywitz and Cecil Reynolds penned their criticism of RTI [here](#). The article furthermore implies that the current definition of dyslexia may be racist and classist.

My comment on the Hechringer site:

I'm hoping you reconsider the conclusion and general orientation of this article. I have enjoyed The Hechinger Report's investigations for years, but this latest article is in my opinion, poorly directed. The dyslexia field has been ravaged over decades by swings of policy that have resulted in excluding students who would benefit from what we now know to be effective interventions – and I have already begun to hear of students being denied support in school that they very much need.

DYSLEXIA DEFINITION WARS

Based on what was shared, Dr. Odegard should have received intervention – and the student who missed by a few points as well. But there is also extensive evidence that dyslexic students identified by a wide discrepancy between ability and reading achievement can have their reading difficulties remediated by targeted intervention as well.

Don't discriminate against these students. We should be helping all those who would benefit from the help rather than taking away from some to give to others.

Also, from our extensive practice with dyslexic students over the years, the IQ tests – although imperfect – can be extremely valuable. So many students (including those from under-represented groups and poor socio-economic backgrounds) may have their ability and intellectual strengths identified for the first time when they have an IQ test done. These students may have been failing at all the school basics – reading, writing, math – then suddenly it's discovered there is an unexpectedly high IQ. It changes how the students see themselves, how parents see them, and how teachers see them, and ideally how their schools educate them.

I do know that many students may be beaten down, not understand the idea of IQ testing or be poor at expressing their ideas when they are tested so that test results don't reflect their true ability – some recognition of these possibilities must also be made – and retest later if possible. But it is a terrible mistake to write off discrepancy as a "disgraced method." It is not.

Look at all the neuroscientific studies of dyslexia- including the pioneering studies involving fMRI. Almost all that we have learned in the last decade about the science of dyslexia comes from groups of dyslexic subjects who were identified by the discrepancy between a measure of their intelligence and single word or nonsense word reading.

Let's also learn from the individual cases that get excluded and plan our education on individuals rather than consensus definitions.

We should be thinking more about how to help all students rather than to take away resources from some to give to others.

- Fernette Eide MD "

It is important that a student not be excluded from reading intervention, if they could benefit, due to arbitrary cut-off defined by policies. Consensus definitions should never get in the way of actual students who have specific educational needs.

It is also important to recognize, too, though, that different levels of IQ among students should have different educational goals and curricula. They may overlap for some teaching, but understandably not all.

A very similar educational debate occurred some 30 years ago - and the end result for many school districts was that parents and teachers were told that schools did not "say dyslexia" and as a result, students' educational programs were detached from the wealth of research and knowledge about dyslexia over the past century.

This latest attack on the definitions of dyslexia can lead to invalidating all the hard work that dyslexia advocates have done over the past years - denying the specific existence of dyslexia (and dyslexia-specific interventions), and likely lumping dyslexic students in to RTI programs that delay effective intervention and support.

This has the danger of relegating dyslexic students to becoming mired in one-size-fits all programs that are neither differentiated for their specific needs nor strengths.

Be aware if you are hearing that IQ or discrepancy are unimportant in the identification of dyslexia - they are not.

There is overwhelming research and clinical support for the identification of dyslexia based on individuals with average or above-average intelligence and unexpected difficulties, for instance, in fluent reading and rapid automatic naming. Students showing these discrepancies are fairly common in the general school population and recognizing their strengths and weaknesses is essential to their obtaining an appropriate education. The needs of these students should never be considered as invalidating the needs of others.



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Churchill's proven methods and well-trained faculty change the lives of children who struggle with dyslexia, ADHD and language-based learning disabilities.

At Churchill, we know our success is measured not by how many students we impact, but by the impact we have on any one student!

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“Summit Center helped me find out I am both dyslexic -- and smart. I just think differently. Now I like school, and I have the tools I need to succeed.”

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

assessment | consultation | treatment

Summit Center specializes in helping students with complex learning profiles and differences -- including kids who may be gifted, and those who might be both gifted and have challenges (known as twice-exceptional or 2e). We provide formal evaluations of strengths and challenges, and offer specific strategies and recommendations to guide growth and maximize potential.



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info@summitcenter.us





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- Fernette Elde, MD