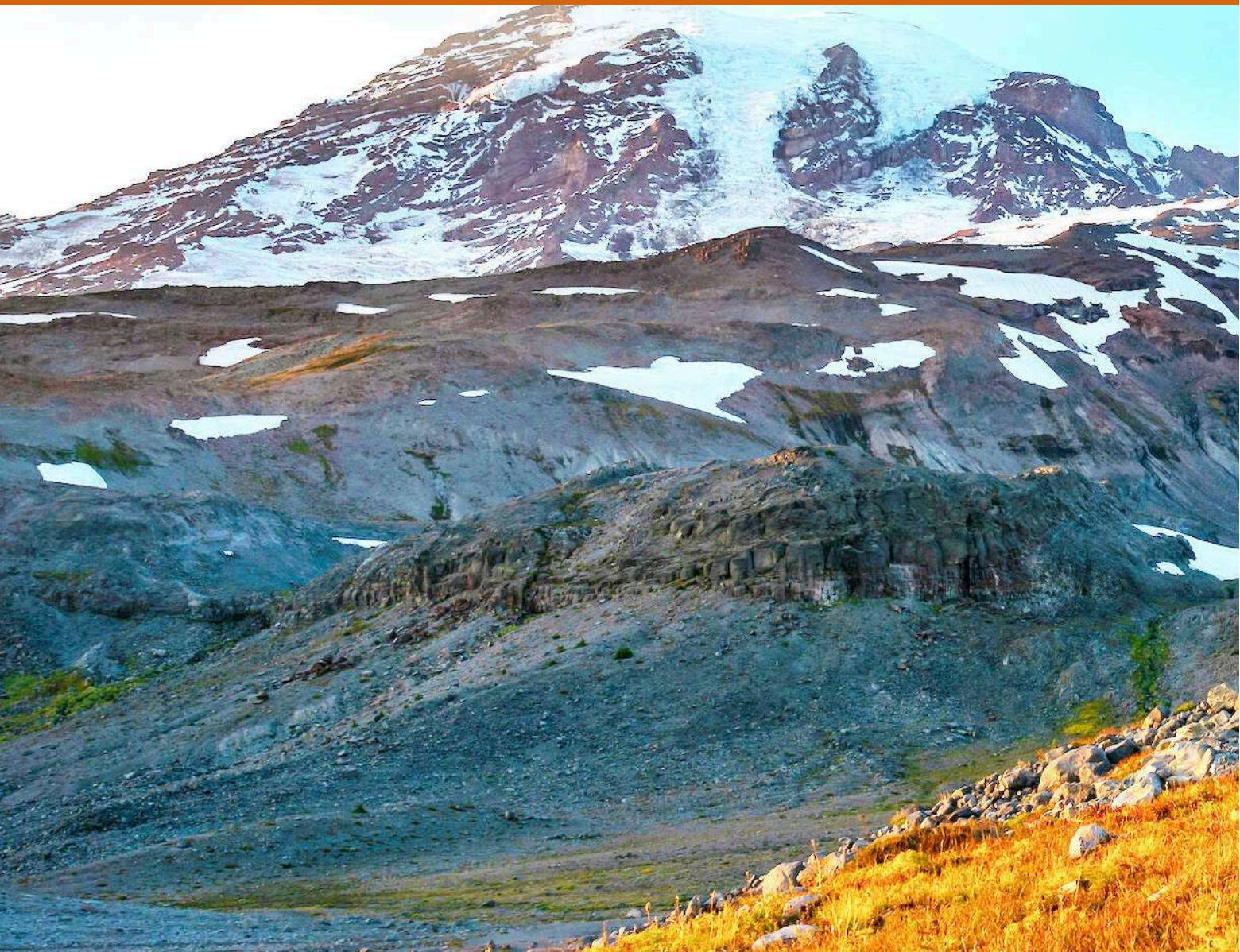


# Dyslexic Advantage

## NEWSLETTER

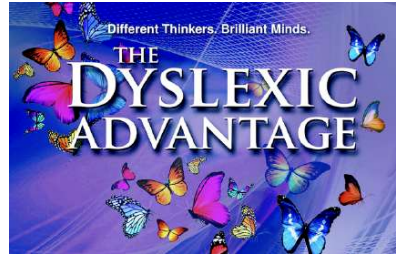


- GIFT THE DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE MOVIE + PROF DEVELOPMENT PACK
- WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR DYSLEXIA?
- DYSLEXIA NEWS
- HELPING THE SLOW START TO TO THE SCHOOL YEAR
- AUDITORY-ONLY PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS TRAINING DOESN'T WORK

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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  
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Andi 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  
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# CONTENTS

DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE ISSUE 118 NOVEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER



**GIFT A TEACHER MOVIE-PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
MINI-COURSE FOR \$18.99 + TAX**

4



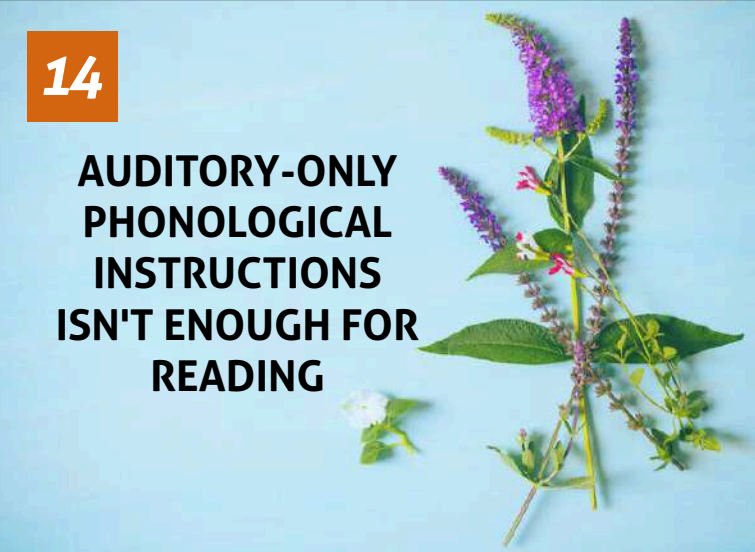
**WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR  
DYSLEXIA?**

7



**SLOW START TO  
THE SCHOOL YEAR?**

14



**AUDITORY-ONLY  
PHONOLOGICAL  
INSTRUCTIONS  
ISN'T ENOUGH FOR  
READING**

18

**DYSLEXIA**

**NEWS**

# WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR DYSLEXIA? TIME FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH TO WORK TOGETHER

In the past few weeks, major changes have been rippling through the U.S. Department of Education. The agency has laid off a large share of its staff—including most of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), which oversees how states follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). At the same time, there's talk of moving IDEA's oversight out of Education altogether and placing it under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

For families and professionals who care about dyslexia, this news feels unsettling. The Department of Education's total budget for 2024 was about \$268 billion—nearly 4 percent of federal spending ([USA Facts, 2025](#)). Yet despite that investment, many students with learning differences still go unidentified or unsupported. So the question is not only what happens if OSEP disappears, but also why, with OSEP in place, has so little changed for so many dyslexic students?

## The Gap Between Two Worlds

For decades, education and medicine have treated dyslexia as if it belonged to separate universes.

Teachers are told to address individual learning needs but rarely receive the training to understand the neurological roots of dyslexia or how it presents differently in each student.

Medical and allied-health professionals—neurologists, psychologists, speech-language pathologists—see the brain side of the picture but often have limited exposure to classroom realities or the science of instruction. The result is a frustrating divide. Schools say they can't "diagnose" dyslexia. Medical providers diagnose it but may not know what to recommend for daily instruction.

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## BIG PICTURE - DYSLEXIA

### A Broader View of Dyslexia

Just as lifestyle medicine now emphasizes long-term cognitive health and quality of life, dyslexia should be seen through a lifelong wellness lens. Considering the breadth of neurobiological differences found between dyslexic and non-dyslexic individuals, it is disappointing that a **recently revised dyslexia definition** endorsed by the International Dyslexia Association narrowed its focus on word reading and spelling, ignoring decades of research literature identifying broad brain-based differences that include automaticity issues - that affect processing speed, working memory and processing load, visual and attentional issues - for example screening out perceptual noise, and mathematics-numeracy issues - in addition to a considerable dyslexia-related strengths research that should not be ignored.

In addition, the new definition eliminates the IQ discrepancy component of dyslexia - which although is imperfect, is the main way that gifted students with dyslexia are identified. I can only assume that the committee that decided this 2025 definition was led astray by not including scientists with a broad understanding of dyslexia throughout the lifespan and those with a sufficiently broad neuroscientific and clinical background that craft a definition that the worldwide dyslexia community could use.

This unfortunate definition will make identification and appropriate support of dyslexic students more difficult.

As a physician and neurologist more specifically, I can unequivocally say that more physicians in the broad field of dyslexia. Family practitioners and pediatricians, and neurologists and neuropsychologists have much to contribute and as well as to learn.

Inadequate understanding and assessments throughout the lifespan have also been hampered by the fact that standard health insurance rarely covers comprehensive dyslexia testing and schools and educational centers rarely have sufficient resources or training opportunities to understand and apply neuroscientific knowledge in their teaching of diverse students.

## LEARNING



### WHY LEARNING CLICKS LATE AND WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

It's November, and for many students the rhythm of school has started to settle in. Assignments, grades, and expectations are clearer. But for others — some of whom may be dyslexic — this is the point when some cracks may begin to show. Despite working hard, their grades don't show it.

Parents may think this is just a "slow-to-start" beginning of school year problem, but it's not poor effort, procrastination or lack of preparation. Instead, they may need to gather enough information that they have a big picture view of new subjects that information can fall neatly into place.

In too many school districts, an emphasis on curriculum standards and checklist of subjects to be covered can result in instruction focused more on fine details rather than big pictures..

#### What Dyslexic Students Need

It's common that students who think in images, systems, or stories need to see how pieces fit together before they can truly learn them. In the first months of a new school year — especially in middle or high school — classes are filled with new vocabulary, unfamiliar structures, and teachers with their own ways of organizing information.

If a student says, "Why do we have to learn this," don't see this as an annoying question. They really need to know why they are learning something otherwise they don't really get any of it. They need the big circle at the center of a mind map that gives context to how all the parts relate together.

# CAST AND CREATORS



Dr Bob Ballard Undersea Explorer  
Founder of Ocean Exploration Trust



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Dyslexic Advantage, CEO of  
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Dr Fernette Eide Physician and Co-  
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Dr Chris Ford Inventor and  
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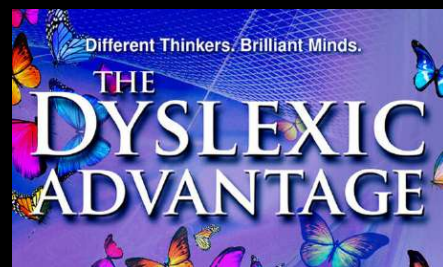
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## LEARNING

A student with strong pattern-recognition or narrative reasoning skills may take longer to grasp what matters most in a subject. Until that larger framework appears, they can feel lost, memorizing without meaning.

In courses like history, literature, math or science, this might look like a student who seems “behind” because they can’t yet recall key facts or definitions. But once they see the connections — how ideas interrelate, or how a concept fits into a larger system — everything suddenly locks into place. Unfortunately, by that point they may be facing low quiz grades or missing assignments that weigh heavily in their overall average.

### How Parents, Tutors, and Teachers Can Help

**Start with the Big Picture.** Ideally, classroom subjects and new topics should be presented with a big picture of what they are learning and studying early. If a student isn't getting this overview, then it would help to go over school work at home with a parent or with a tutor if one is available.

For instance, if a student tells you, "I don't understand what improper fractions are or why we need to learn them", then they need a big picture overview - a definition of the improper fraction, but also how the concept of an improper fraction is helpful in math computation but also in real work applications.

So you can first say that improper fractions are a helpful way of showing parts of whole objects when there are more parts than a single whole.

For example, if you have 2 pizzas divided into 4 parts and you eat 5 slices or parts, then you've eaten 1 and  $1/4$  pizzas which could be represented as  $1 \frac{1}{4}$  (a mixed number) or  $5/4$ . The  $5/4$  tells you about how the pizzas were divided without having to keep track how many full pizzas were eaten - but it can also be helpful being able to change mixed numbers into improper fractions because it allows you to compare numbers and certain calculations like multiplication and division of fractions. So rather than memorizing 'rules' improper fractions are an efficient notation that keeps fractions logical and consistent.

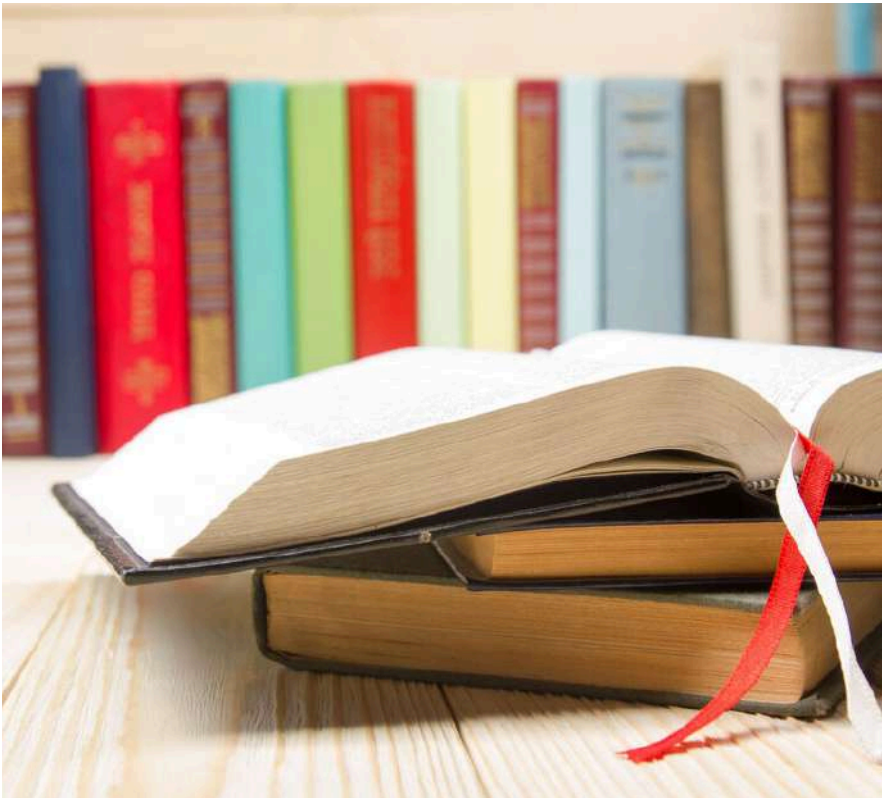
Work with physical examples (these can be simple like doodles of pizza then cut into slices) and don't take away these physical examples too soon.

Work through problems as long as it takes. If your student is learning something that you don't know the big picture about, then use [google.com](http://google.com) or [chatgpt.com](http://chatgpt.com) (double-check information, but usually straightforward questions are correct) to ask what the big picture is about learning a particular subject.

**Work with Answers and Correctly Solved Problems** Don't be afraid of working through correctly solved problems - it's a more efficient way for students to learn than endlessly trying to solve problems and getting wrong solutions.

If your student has working memory difficulties, dysgraphia, and trouble working with math symbols then request accommodations for shorter homework assignments. It is better for dyslexic students to have practice with classic example questions working open book and understandy the problem solving steps in their entirety than being assigned 10x the number of problems that will leave them more confused, hopelessly behind, and burdened by anxiety.

It is simpler than ever to get big picture views on literature assignments and history given the internet and AI, but make sure your student doesn't get tempted to just use digital resources to cheat without gaining any knowledge.



### Explain Vocabulary

Explain vocabulary recognizing that some subjects like literature and history may be filled with words that students won't be easily able to decode. It's surprisingly common for teachers to differentiate formal reading assignments, but overlook the need to give students accessible textbooks or ways to simplify texts for their reading level.

## LEARNING

### Avoid Pop Quizzes and Consider Delaying First Quizzes

Teachers should avoid giving students pop quizzes, instead considering non-graded self-testing and follow-up discussions that confirm understanding.

### Encourage Explaining Back

Encourage a regular practice of explaining back to confirm a student's understanding. This can be done with reading books (the experience becomes memorable) as well as with math problem solving and really anything else.

### Are There Such Things As Helicopter Parents? Not So Much for Dyslexic Students...

If you're a parent working with your student on homework every night, you're not alone. It's very common among families where students go onto become very successful. We remember a lawyer sharing that his mother was helping him with papers in college and tech entrepreneur whose mother helped him with math homework throughout his higher education; it does get better and sometimes parents have to hand off the tutoring to others - but it is a reality - that the majority of dyslexic students are quite late-blooming.

It is wise to be wary of making your student too dependent on you, but sometimes there is no one else to help - and in truth, your help could really make a difference.

Do teach your students to practice self-advocacy, They will need to advocate for themselves many times through their education and perhaps for their entire life.



\*\* Gift a Teacher: **Dyslexic Advantage Movie - Professional Development Pack** For \$18.99, teachers get to stream the movie at home + a short mini-course and 2 continuing education credits with successful course completion.

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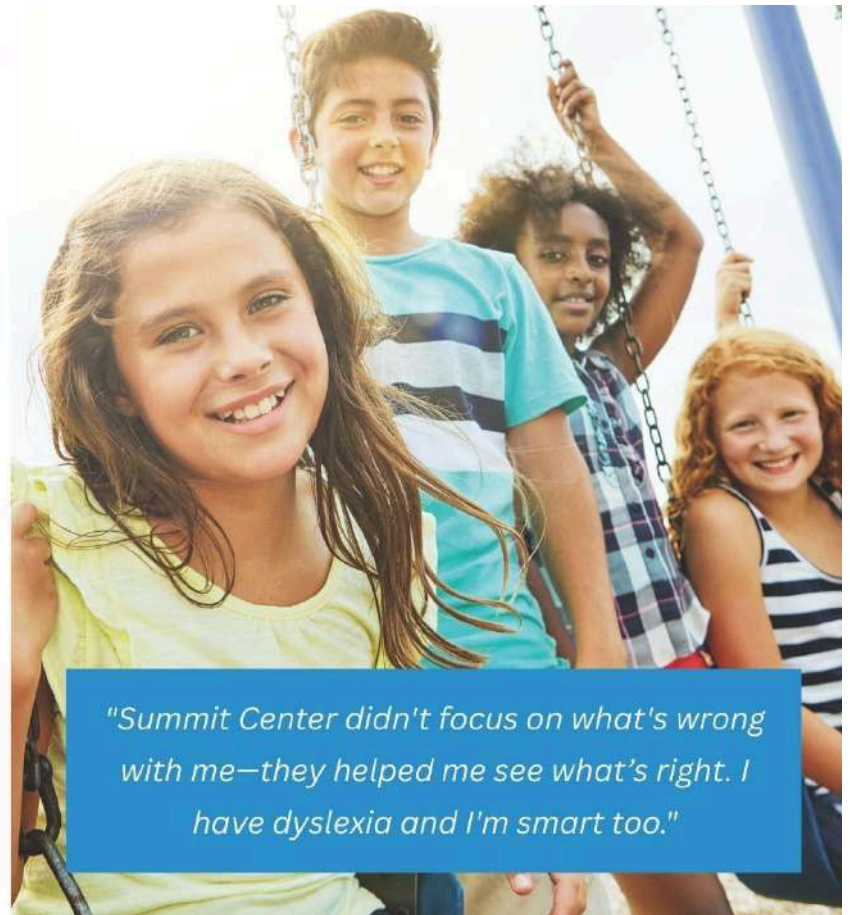
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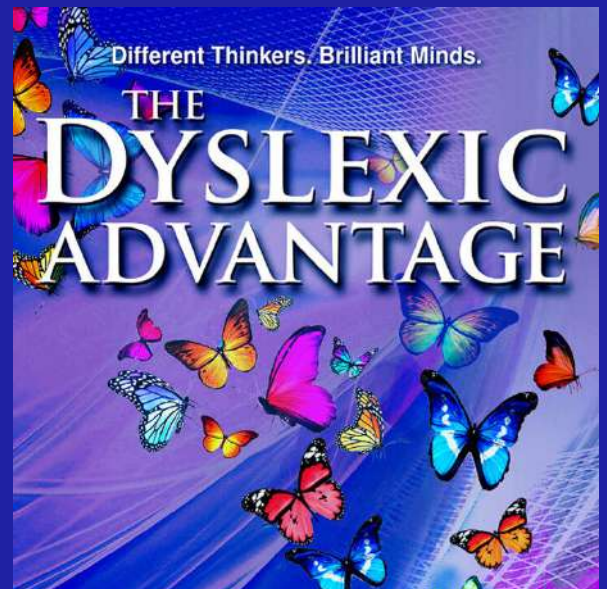
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## RETHINKING AUDITORY- ONLY PHONEMIC AWARENESS TRAINING FOR READING IN THE EARLY GRADES DOES NOT WORK



This past week, a [new study](#) reported on in [Education Week](#) found that a widely-used phonemic awareness program (the oral-only Heggerty curriculum) did not improve gains in word reading or oral reading fluency, although it did significantly improve phonemic awareness skills. What's important to note is that this curriculum first started with auditory only - so focusing separating out the sounds in a word like 'dog', rather than connecting the sounds to letters (phonics). The Heggerty curriculum, used by up to 25% of schools in one survey, emphasizes sound manipulations for young children - and it may be too much of an isolated exercise at this age to translate into reading gains...to be fair though, the study was based on the 2014 program and later version included more practice with sounds and letters.

From Dr. Michael Coyne, lead author of the paper:

"If you don't have a strong, systematic phonics program in place, at least in this study, it wasn't enough for schools to add [phonemic awareness] in."

For the dyslexia community and teachers of structured literacy, this finding reinforces a long standing principle: Phonemic awareness is on the first step in several components needed for reading: phonology, phonics (sound-symbol matching), syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

There is significant value in establishing correct processing of sounds in young children - especially as there may be other factors hearing the sounds within words... for example chronic ear infections, auditory processing delays due to factors such as premature birth or common dyslexia-associated auditory processing issues, but to advance reading, early sound-symbol work and likely multisensory supports - like pictures, letter tiles, finger tapping, mirror work or kinesthetic associations will help children who may have trouble keeping auditory-information alone in pre-reading instruction.

What is missing from a discussion on this research so far, are common medical or physiological issues that can be found in every K-12 classroom. This is the health-education divide that was referred to in the [Who's Responsible for Dyslexia article](#) on page 4 of this issue.

What this research paper does not say is that auditory-only phonemic awareness work is not important for building fluent readers. The question that is raised is how long in the process - and whether concurrent phonics work will get children more quickly to their end goal of becoming fluent readers.

Good curriculum for dyslexic and other early readers tend to involve some multisensory supports that help students with young but growing auditory working memories that otherwise might lose or confuse sounds and sound sequences. [Vuontela et al. \(2003\)](#) have shown that as a group, boys have much weaker working memories from ages 6-10 compared to girls. Placing too much demand on young children by auditory-only work not only delay their success as readers, but also set them up for failure because expectations are not developmentally-appropriate.

Schools and educators should interpret this latest study as a caution, but not throw out phonemic instruction which is a foundation for other reading skills.

Pay close attention to children showing weak auditory processing and refer them to their family doctors along with observations you may have made in the classroom. Apparent inattentiveness could be due to undiagnosed auditory problems...and don't "wait and see" when some adjustment in your curriculum may be necessary for your class or certain students.

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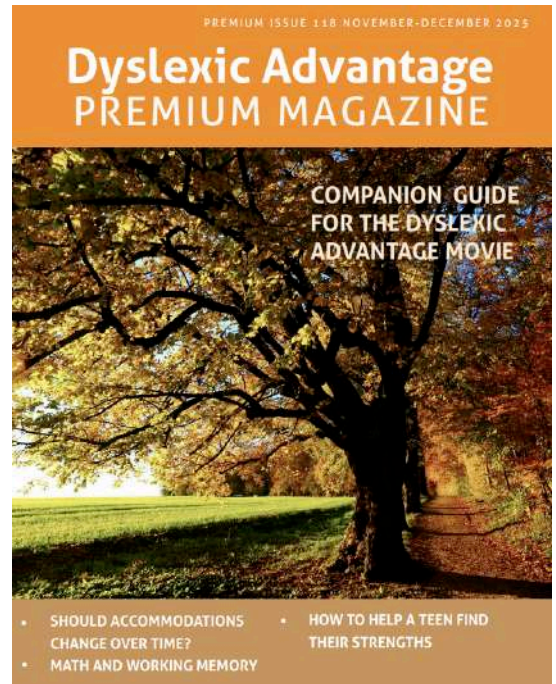
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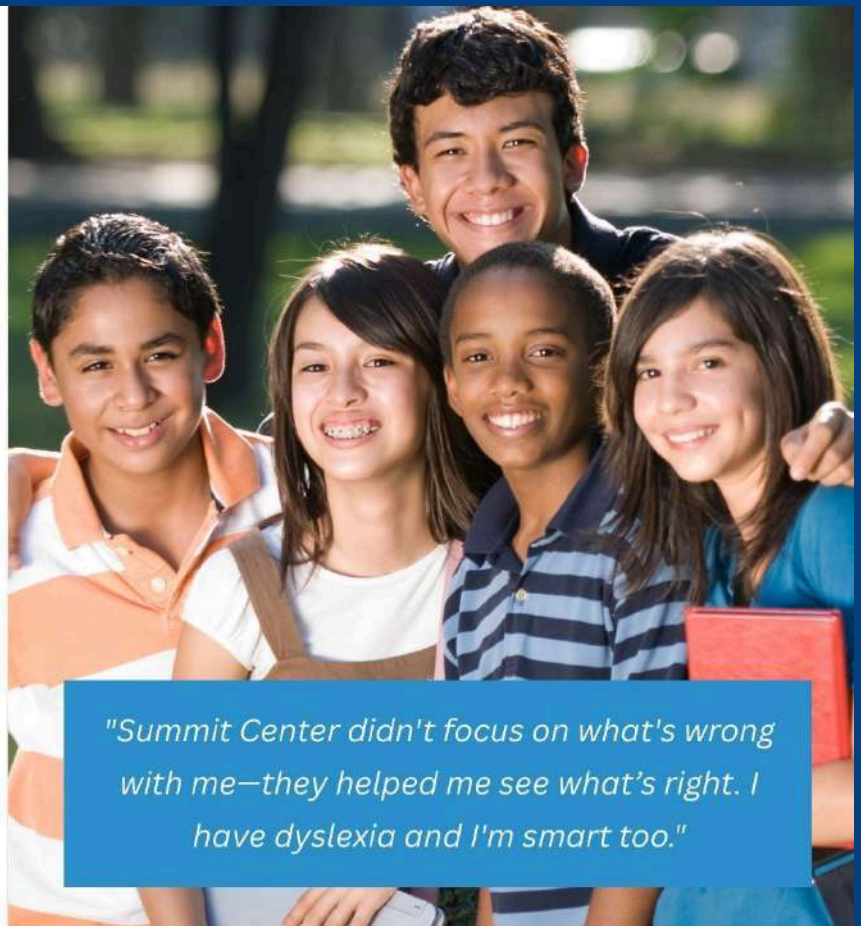
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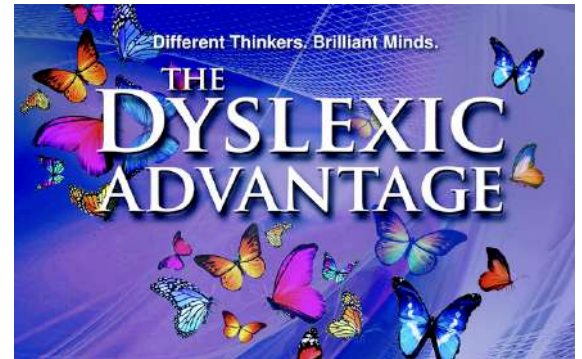


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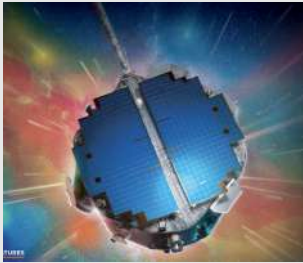
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## Million Miles Away- Read - includes a great interview with Dr. David McComas and his dyslexia journey

Princeton Alumni Weekly



## They Changed How We See Dyslexia - The Eides

### Dyslexic Journey: Support Your Kid

University Psychology Study: Participants needed!  
Exploration Specialisation in Dyslexia:  
Implications on Environmental Understanding



This study explores the cognitive differences and strengths associated with dyslexia and how they impact perceptions of sustainability. If you are interested in participating, please click the link below or follow the QR code.

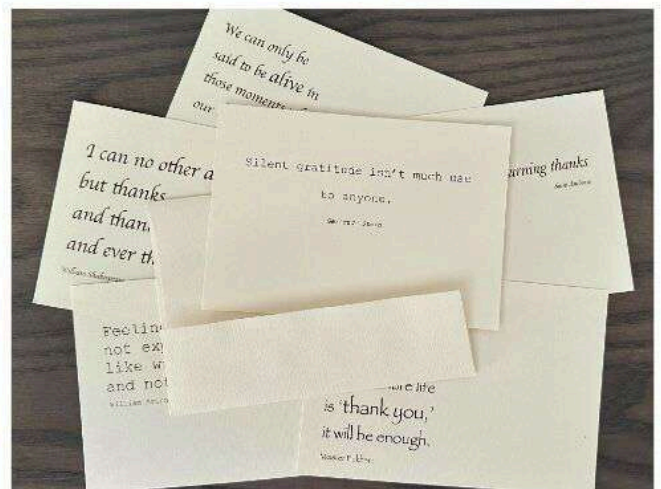
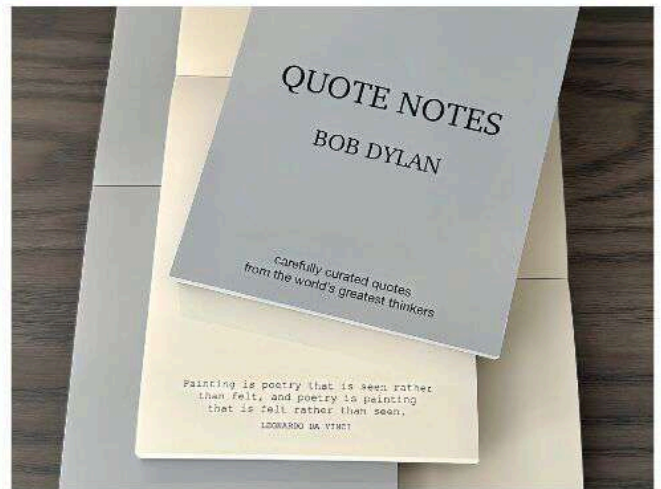
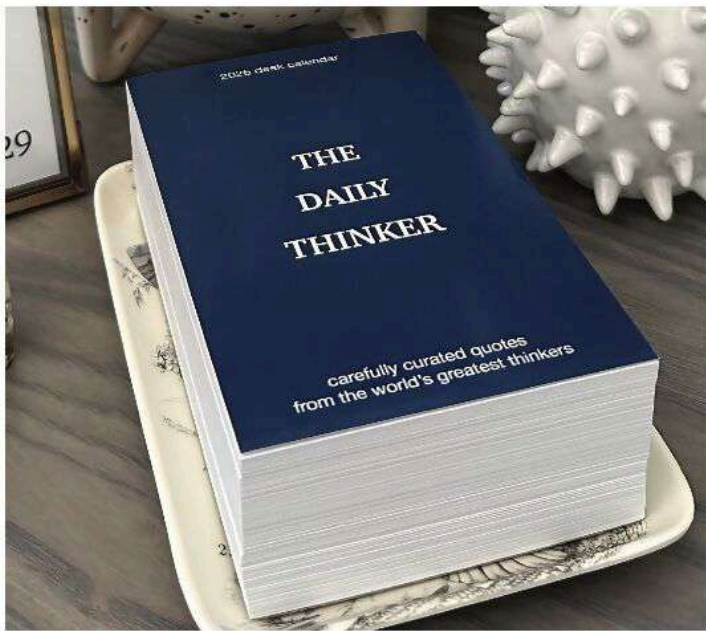
Please feel free to reach out to hlynell@tcd.ie if you require assistance with the survey and I can arrange a zoom-call.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7281926>



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