

WHAT EVERY EDUCATOR SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DYSLEXIA

A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that dyslexia is the result of a neurological glitch in the wiring of the brain. To be sure, researchers still don't understand everything there is to know about this learning disability. But sophisticated scanning techniques have enabled us to identify three key brain regions in the reading of the printed word. All three are found in the left-brain hemisphere and operate simultaneously.

1. The Phoneme Producer helps a person vocalize words silently or out loud.
2. The Word Analyzer pulls the words apart and links them to their appropriate sounds.
3. The Automatic Detector is the part of the brain that automates the reading process.

Brain scans of dyslexics suggest that a glitch in their brain prevents them from easily gaining access to the Word Analyzer and the Automatic Detector. Because recognizing words does not become automatic, reading is slow and labored. Imagine having to deal with each word you see as if you had never come across it before, and you will start to get the idea.

So what can be done to address this problem? Here are some key elements:

1. Practice manipulating syllables of words, building vocabulary, increasing comprehension and improving the fluency of reading.
2. Boost the confidence of dyslexics wherever possible. Their self-confidence often has crumbled when they've seen other students progressing and, even worse, as their peers taunt or ostracize them.
3. Allow the dyslexic child to practice reading aloud with a skilled reader who can gently correct mistakes. That way the brain builds up the right associations between words and sounds from the start.
4. An early intervention will always produce the best results. If you suspect there is a problem, refer parents for an assessment.

5. Realize that there are no quick fixes. Dyslexic students often have to put many more hours into their schoolwork than naturally skilled readers do.
6. Finally, look at the positives. Dyslexics often develop extraordinary perseverance and their struggles with reading prepare them for dealing with adversity in a volatile, fast-changing world. They are also often skilled problem-solvers, coming at solutions from novel or surprising angles.