

65<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

**GRADUATION:**  
**The Measure of Tomorrow**  
Teaching Students with  
**Dyslexia: Myths, Facts, &**  
**Best Practices**

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

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**Quiz: Dyslexia Myths or Facts**

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**Quiz: Dyslexia Myths or Facts**

Art & Craft  
of Teaching

**VS**

Research &  
Evidence-based  
practices

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### Characteristics: Fact or Myth?

**1** Seeing letters and words backwards is a characteristic of dyslexia.

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Dear Dr. Hodges

I hope you know I am wasn't a good writer until you showed up.

At age 10, this student continues to struggle with directionality, and orthographic representations are not yet firmly established.

**Dyslexia is NOT a problem of "seeing & writing backwards"**

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### Characteristics: Fact or Myth?

**1** Seeing letters and words backwards is a characteristic of dyslexia.

- **Writing letters and words backwards are often symptoms of dyslexia.**
- **HOWEVER**, doing so is common in the early stages of learning to read and write among average and dyslexic children alike.
- "Reversals" are a sign that orthographic representations (i.e., letter forms and spellings of words) have not been firmly established, not that a child necessarily has a reading disability (Adams, 1990)

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**2** One of the major reasons for dyslexia-caused difficulties is due to visual problems.

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**2** One of the major reasons for dyslexia-caused difficulties is due to visual problems.

- Although some individuals with dyslexia do report difficulty with vision, **there is little evidence to support that this is related to dyslexia** (Christenson, Griffin, & Taylor, 2001; Fletcher, Foorman, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 1999).

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### Characteristics: Fact or Myth?

**3** Dyslexia is a disability specific to the English language.

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### Characteristics: Fact or Myth?

**3** Dyslexia is a disability specific to the English language.

- Dyslexia appears in all cultures and languages in the world with written language, including those that do not use an alphabetic script such as Korean and Hebrew.
- In English, the primary difficulty is accurate decoding of unknown words.
- In consistent orthographies such as German or Italian, dyslexia appears more often as a problem with fluent reading – readers may be accurate, but very slow (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005).

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### Characteristics: Fact or Myth?

**4** All students with dyslexia are intellectually gifted.

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### Characteristics: Fact or Myth?

**4** All students with dyslexia are intellectually gifted.

- Dyslexia or reading disability occurs in people of all levels of intelligence, not just the intellectually gifted (Moats & Dakin, 2012). There is absolutely no relation between dyslexia and IQ. Students with dyslexia can have high, middle or low IQs. In fact, researchers have shown that the nature and characteristics of a serious reading problem are not predicted by IQ.

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**5** Dyslexia is caused by a literacy-poor home environment (e.g., parents not reading to their children).

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**5** Dyslexia is caused by a literacy-poor home environment (e.g., parents not reading to their children).

- Dyslexia has a neurobiological origin.
- Dyslexia is not caused by poverty, developmental delay, speech or hearing impairments, although those conditions may put a child more at risk for developing a reading difficulty (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**6** Children with dyslexia are likely to have parents with dyslexia.

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**6** Children with dyslexia are likely to have parents with dyslexia.

- Recent studies report a heritability of 50–70% (Harlaar, Spinath, Dale, & Plomin, 2005; de Kovel et al. 2004; Snowling, Gallagher, & Frith, 2003)
- Parents with dyslexia may have difficulty supporting students homework (Bonifacci, Montuschi, Lami, & Snowling, 2014).
- Gene\*Environment Interaction (Rutter, Moffit, & Caspi, 2006)

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**7** Dyslexia occurs more frequently in boys than in girls.

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### Causes: Fact or Myth?

**7** Dyslexia occurs more frequently in boys than in girls.

#### Prevalence vs Identified

- Longitudinal evidence suggests that an equal number of boys and girls are **affected** by dyslexia (Wadsworth, Knopik, & DeFries, 2000).
- However, more boys are **identified** for reading disabilities (Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fletcher & Escobar, 1990)

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**Prognosis: Fact or Myth?**

**8** Children will outgrow dyslexia.

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**Prognosis: Fact or Myth?**

**8** Children will outgrow dyslexia.

- Adolescents with **dyslexia continue to have deficits in phonological coding**, the most discriminating measure of reading difficulty.
- Children with dyslexia **do not spontaneously recover** from reading delays (Shaywitz, et al., 1999).

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**Prognosis: Fact or Myth?**

**9** At some age, it is too late to teach a student with dyslexia to read.

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### Prognosis: Fact or Myth?

**9** At some age, it is too late to teach a student with dyslexia to read.

- The earlier struggling readers are identified and provided systematic, intense instruction, the less severe their problems are likely to be (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Torgesen, 2002).
- With adequately intensive instruction, however, even older children with dyslexia can become accurate, albeit slow readers (Torgesen et al., 2001).

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**10** Individuals with dyslexia have difficulty with decoding/word recognition, exclusively.

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**10** Individuals with dyslexia have difficulty with decoding and word recognition exclusively.

- Dyslexia is characterized by the difficulties with **accurate and/or fluent word recognition** and by **poor spelling** and **decoding abilities** resulting from a deficit in the **phonological component** of language that is often unexpected in relation to cognitive abilities and effective classroom instruction.
- Secondary consequences may include problems in **reading comprehension** and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of **vocabulary** and background knowledge (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003).

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**10** Individuals with dyslexia have difficulty with decoding/word recognition, exclusively.

- Many with dyslexia have difficulties with some **math** tasks and especially with the **language of math** and the reasoning processes necessary for understanding concepts (Leong & Jerred, 2001)
- Social language

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**11** Children with dyslexia have difficulties with spelling.

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**11** Children with dyslexia have difficulties with spelling.



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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**12** Dyslexia can cause difficulty with writing.

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**12** Dyslexia can cause difficulty with writing.

- Students with dyslexia do have difficulty with **automatic letter writing and naming**,
- which was related to **impaired inhibition** and **verbal fluency** and may explain their **spelling** problems (Berninger, Nielsen, Abbott, Wijsman, & Raskind, 2008).

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### Implications: Fact or Myth?

**12** Dyslexia can cause difficulty with writing.

Dear Mrs. Hodges,  
 The thief has sent  
 message in the news paper, some  
 people think that the thief should  
 give back the painting but the  
 thief wants the crime  
 centuries old crime fixed, but  
 until then he will have the  
 painting.  
 Sincerely,

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**Implications: Fact or Myth?**

**13** Dyslexia and emotional/social problems are highly correlated.

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**Implications: Fact or Myth?**

**13** Dyslexia and emotional/social problems are highly correlated.

- Students with dyslexia are regularly required to complete tasks that are extremely difficult for them. Despite countless hours spent in remediation, their **progress may be agonizingly slow and frustrating**. Others have not had the proper support. Some have been compared to their siblings or classmates, leaving them to feel **embarrassed, cautious, and defensive**.

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**Implications: Fact or Myth?**

**13** Dyslexia and emotional/social problems are highly correlated.

- Many with dyslexia experience **high stress levels**, specifically in
- **interactions with teachers**,
- **worries about assessment** and performance testing, causing emotional problems (e.g., fear, shyness and loneliness) and
- **physiological symptoms** (e.g., nausea, tremors or rapid heart rate; Alexander-Passe, 2008).

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

# 14

Children with dyslexia need more systematic and explicit reading (direct literacy) instruction than their typically developing peers.

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

# 14

Children with dyslexia need more systematic and explicit reading (direct literacy) instruction than their typically developing peers.

**Mastering the alphabetic principle** (that written symbols are associated with phonemes) is essential to becoming proficient in the skill of reading, and methods that teach this principle directly are more effective than those that do not (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001)

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

# 14

Children with dyslexia need more systematic and explicit reading (direct literacy) instruction than their typically developing peers.

- Instruction must be **more explicit** and **comprehensive** (e.g., **more intensive**, and **more supportive** than the instruction provided to the majority of children (Torgesen, Foorman, & Wagner, 2007)
- **Structured literacy instruction** in the areas of **phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable types, morphology, syntax, and semantics**
- Explicit instruction is direct, systematic, and leaves nothing to chance (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001)

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**15** Dyslexia can be helped by using colored lenses and/or colored overlays.

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**15** Dyslexia can be helped by using colored lenses and/or colored overlays.

- There is **no independent research evidence** that using colored overlays or special lenses has any effect on the word reading or comprehension of children with dyslexia (Iovino, Fletcher, Breitmeyer, & Foorman, 1998; Henderson, Tsogka, & Snowling, 2013)

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**16** Eye tracking exercises are effective in remediating dyslexia-caused difficulties.

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**16** Eye tracking exercises are effective in remediating dyslexia-caused difficulties.

- The current research consensus indicates dyslexia is best characterized as a problem with **language processing at the phoneme level, not a problem with visual processing** (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003; Morris et al., 1998; Rayner et al., 2001; Wagner & Torgesen, 1987), therefore direct, explicit instruction on language processing at the phoneme level is essential.

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**17** Certain medications have been found to be effective in treating dyslexia.

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**17** Certain medications have been found to be effective in treating dyslexia.

- **There are NO known medical treatments for Dyslexia.**
- This misconception may come from the fact that dyslexia and ADHD often co-occur. Medications have been found to be effective in treating attention disorders.

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**18** Public schools don't recognize students with dyslexia.

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**18** Public schools don't recognize students with dyslexia.

**Current Definition of Specific Learning Disability:**  
A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in impaired ability to listen, think, speak read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, **dyslexia**, and developmental aphasia. It does not include learning problems that are the primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, or intellectual disabilities, serious emotional disturbance, or of environmental, culture, or economic disadvantage (NC Policy 2014).

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**18** Public schools don't recognize students with dyslexia.

**Proposed Definition of Specific Learning Disability:**  
Means a disability in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the impaired ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. The disability substantially limits academic achievement so that the child does not learn at an adequate rate when provided sustained, high quality instruction and scientific research-based intervention. Alternate terms may include, but are not limited to, **dyslexia** and dyscalculia.

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**19** Public school teachers don't know how to teach students with dyslexia

- Over the past 3 years,
  - over 4,000 special and general educators, and administrators have completed the 30-hour Reading Foundations Course, which is based in the principles of instruction for students with dyslexia: systematic, explicit and multisensory instruction.
  - 3,492 educators in NC were trained in evidence-based reading programs as part of NC SIP grant work

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**19** Public school teachers don't know how to teach students with dyslexia

- Still more work to do:**
- In North Carolina (2012-2013)
    - 115 school districts
    - 2,426 traditional schools and 108 charter schools
    - 93,964 teachers (NCPublicSchools.gov)

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### Interventions: Fact or Myth?

**20** Higher education does not prepare teachers to meet the needs of students with dyslexia

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**20** Higher education does not prepare teachers to meet the needs of students with dyslexia

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP; formerly NCATE) require IHEs follow the Council for Exceptional Children's professional standards..

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**20** Higher education does not prepare teachers to meet the needs of students with dyslexia

- Council for Exceptional Children's professional standards. Beginning special education professionals:
- understand how exceptionalities may interact with development and learning and use this knowledge to provide meaningful and challenging learning experiences for individuals with exceptionalities
  - use knowledge of general and specialized curricula to individualize learning for individuals with exceptionalities
  - select, adapt, and use a repertoire of evidence based instructional strategies to advance learning of individuals with exceptionalities.

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**20** Higher education does not prepare teachers to meet the needs of students with dyslexia

- The NC State Improvement Project (NC SIP) currently partners with the following Institutes of Higher Education to align content curriculum with Reading Foundations coursework thus improving pre-service teacher preparation and efficacy in teaching reading to students with disabilities:
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte
  - East Carolina University
  - University of North Carolina at Pembroke
  - North Carolina State University

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**20** Higher education does not prepare teachers to meet the needs of students with dyslexia

All (in-state and out-of-state) Elementary Education K-6 and Exceptional Children: General Curriculum (K-12) initial licensure applicants are required to pass the **North Carolina Foundations of Reading Test**, which, covers:

- Foundations of Reading Development,
- Development of Reading Comprehension
- Reading Assessment and Instruction (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015)

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

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**Interventions: Fact or Myth?**

**20** Higher education does not prepare teachers to meet the needs of students with dyslexia

**Still more work to do**

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**Quiz: Dyslexia Myths or Facts**

- What surprised you?
- What other misconceptions do you hear in the field?

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**Quiz: Dyslexia Myths or Facts**

- What surprised you?
- What other misconceptions do you hear in the field?

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