

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Seven Common Signs of Dyslexia in the Classroom.

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Recognizing signs. Providing support. Guiding toward success.

Dyslexia at a Glance:

One of the most gratifying experiences an educator can have is seeing a student succeed. Sometimes, however, educators encounter a particularly intelligent and hardworking student who excels in most subjects, but consistently struggles with reading. Most likely, this student is battling the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties: dyslexia. Dyslexia is more than just having trouble recognizing letters; it's a complex neurological difference.

The International Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as...

a language-based learning disability. Dyslexia refers to a cluster of symptoms, which result in people having difficulties with special language skills, particularly reading. Students with dyslexia usually experience difficulties with other language skills such as spelling, writing and pronouncing words.

Compounding the problem is the fact that dyslexia is a disability that too often goes undiagnosed.



A Costly, Undiagnosed Educational Roadblock

One in **five** American students has dyslexia. Chances are you have one or more dyslexic students in your classroom.

Dyslexia often gets attributed to being a behavioral issue. What might be seen as laziness or acting out in reality is a student inwardly struggling with reading. He may be working hard to cover up what he senses is a problem, but doesn't know how to ask for help.

Dyslexia can also often go undetected because the student is smart enough to find ways to compensate and hide his reading deficit, so he is never discovered. His intelligence, creativity and verbal skills mask his reading challenges. He manages to do "well enough" without reaching his potential.



Did you know Einstein was dyslexic?

This despite the fact that he had an estimated IQ of 160.

Have you seen these signs in the classroom?

Dyslexia is something that your colleagues in special education and learning support are trained to recognize and formally evaluate. But you can use your daily experience in the classroom and knowledge of your students to recognize the signs that are commonly hiding in plain sight.

Does this sound like one of your students?

If so, your next step should be to speak to your student's parents as well as your school's special education team to request a formal screening. If diagnosed with dyslexia (or another learning disability), you, together with the parents and your learning support team, can plan a course of action to help your student succeed in the classroom.

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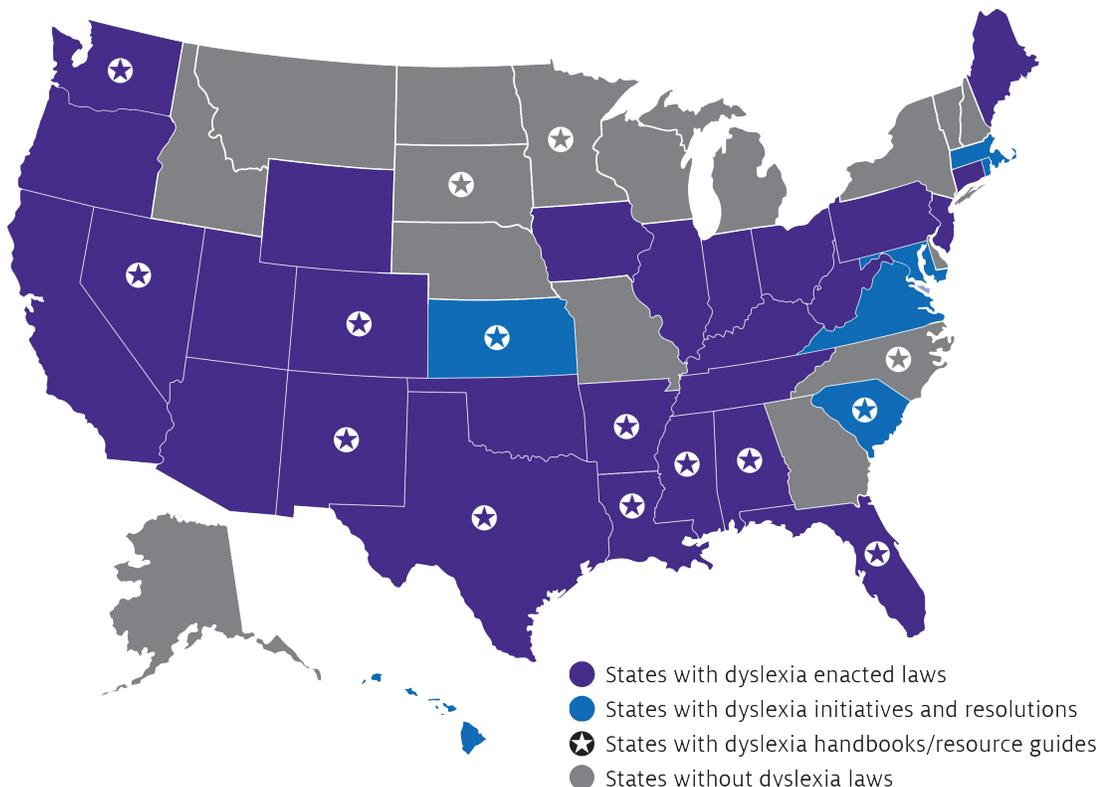
One in five school children in America has dyslexia

When dyslexia is not properly identified, there are costs. Students don't get the help they need and fail to reach their potential. Over time, they struggle with school and have higher dropout rates, reducing the potential benefit and impact they can have on society. Most troubling is that, when not properly understood as a true learning difference, having dyslexia leads to feelings of inadequacy and shame in a student. There is nothing shameful about being dyslexic. Those neurological differences that make reading difficult also help dyslexics excel in other areas, like big-picture thinking, creativity, spatial relationships, design and entrepreneurialism... which explains why some are so incredibly successful.

The challenges of dyslexia may seem daunting. But there is good news. Early identification of dyslexia helps a student receive the assistance and resources they need to be successful. And support systems exist for teachers and parents to help students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

The federal law called IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) requires all children with learning issues to get the assistance they need in school. Furthermore, many states have laws specifically addressing dyslexia support.

Dyslexia Legislation and Resources in the United States



Seven Common Signs of Dyslexia:

1

He doesn't recognize words accurately.

You show him a picture of rabbits, with the caption "rabbits," and he responds "bunnies."

2

She cannot read a sentence smoothly.

You may notice your student skipping small words in a sentence. For example, if you asked her to read the previous sentence, she would do so as "may skip small words sentence."

3

He is a poor speller.

You should raise a red flag when a student consistently uses irregular capitalization, omits vowels and changes phonetic spelling. For example, "said" becomes "sed" when written out.

4

She has difficulty decoding words.

The process of translating a printed word into a sound is called decoding. Since letter confusion is a classic sign of dyslexia, you should take note of a student who confuses "p" with "b" and "d," especially past the first or second grade.

5

He has below-average language skills.

You may notice that a student has a hard time rhyming. Dyslexics struggle with hearing the component sounds in words and therefore often don't appreciate the subtleties of rhymes. Additionally, he may read in a monotone style. This is likely because he has misunderstood the punctuation in the sentence.

6

She acts out at reading time.

You may notice that whenever you have silent reading time, your student becomes easily distracted, starts bothering classmates or desires to leave the classroom. She may be trying to avoid reading altogether because reading is so difficult for her.

7

His reading ability is far below that of his overall intelligence.

Dyslexia is not related or connected in any way to intelligence. In fact, you may notice that while your student struggles in reading comprehension, he excels in many other subjects and areas.

You should also be aware that **dyslexic students require** special reading programs that are visual, auditory and kinesthetic (i.e., the program must be multi-sensory) and involve a high degree of repetition to address their challenges with decoding the written word. That kind of support is critical and needs to come from a specialist, but there's much that you can do to help in the general classroom.

Take Action:

Classroom Tools and Tips

If you have a student with dyslexia, you can incorporate certain strategies that address your student's needs—and the rest of your classroom—even if you aren't a specialist in teaching children with dyslexia.



Change Expectations

A student with dyslexia will begin to regain his confidence as a learner if you can remove certain everyday obstacles that cause him to feel as if he is failing as a student. Consider the following:

Don't make him read in front of the class.

Since people with dyslexia have difficulty decoding words and understanding punctuation, asking your student to read out loud will put extra pressure on him, and possibly make him hesitant to read at all.

Allow extra time to take tests.

A dyslexic student will most likely need more than the given time to read and comprehend questions on a test.

Read quiz questions out loud to ensure comprehension.

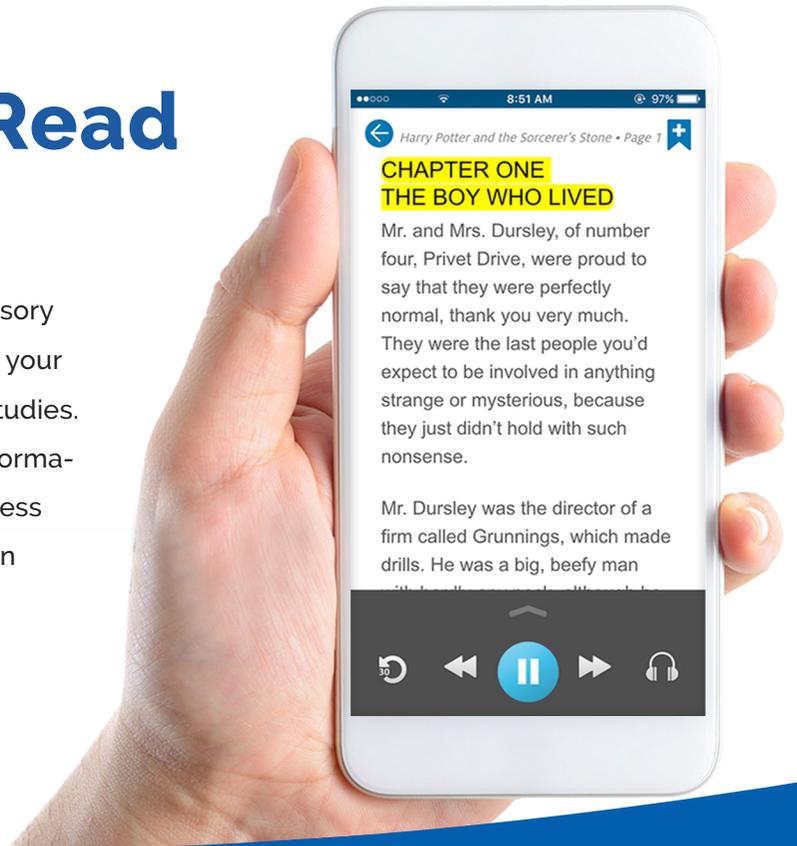
Dyslexics can better understand directions and questions when they hear and see the words together.

Don't take points off for incorrect spelling.

Letter confusion is a classic sign of dyslexia. To the untrained eye, a dyslexic student seems to be a bad speller. If the context of his answer is correct and you sense it is the dyslexia that is making him spell poorly, you can choose to overlook these "mistakes."

Utilize Human-Read Audiobooks

Audiobooks are proven to complement multi-sensory reading programs, and the two combined enable your student with dyslexia to stay on track with their studies. Audiobooks allow students to learn important information they need when reading is a challenge. Success in reading will boost self-confidence, which in turn fosters achievement.



Some of the benefits of human-read audiobooks

- Improved comprehension, now that the student can hear and read the text simultaneously.
- Better word recognition, increased reading rates, and improved overall vocabulary.
- Increased self-esteem and confidence in the classroom, which leads to academic success.

Providing accommodations as early as third grade is essential and something students with dyslexia will use throughout their academic career and life. As reading demands increase, these students will now be able to focus on the content rather than the mechanics of reading and stay on track with class assignments.

Next Steps:

Make sure your students don't fall behind!

Experts say that a child's brain is most adaptable at younger ages, which is why recognizing, identifying and responding to dyslexia early is key. Learning Ally can help.

The Learning Ally solution easily integrates into the classroom and is proven to transform the lives of students with dyslexia by providing access to grade level materials boosting vocabulary, comprehension and critical thinking skills. Human-read audiobooks turn reluctant readers into engaged learners.

The cost-effective solution includes:

- **Access to human-read audiobooks and audiobook reader**

Access to a library of human-read audiobooks containing all of the literature, popular fiction and textbooks your students need and want to read.

- **Tools and resources to get your students reading quickly**

Teacher launch plans provide a simple step by step process to seamlessly integrate into all learning environments.

- **Track students' reading progress**

Progress monitoring platform with dashboards so you can easily manage your students' reading progress and reading assignments. Share reports and engage parents in their child's reading progress.

- **Programs to build engagement for better outcomes and student success**

We have games and contests to get your students excited and motivated to read more.



To learn more:

Visit learningally.org/educators

Call us at 800.221.1098