

# Imagine the Possibilities

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## Is your child reading & spelling at grade level?

Reading is fundamental and essential for academic success.

So, what do you do when your child is not reading at grade level? Consider the following scenario.

*Aiden is a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student who struggles to read. Although Aiden is very smart and shows great strengths in math and the ability to work with his hands, he is reading at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. Aiden avoids reading at all costs and has never read for enjoyment. Aiden has difficulty pronouncing long words and uses many "um's" and pauses when he's searching for the right words to say. Aiden's spelling is well below grade level, and his reading rate is very slow. When Aiden reads aloud he often skips little words such as: of, the, but, or, as, and was. He even adds extra sounds to words (/l/, /r/, /n/) and often omits prefixes and suffixes when reading larger words. Sounding out new words is frustrating for Aiden, and after several attempts at sounding out a word incorrectly he becomes exasperated and states, "I don't know this word – I can't read!" Aiden's inability to read fluently has affected his self-esteem, and is affecting his academic progress.*

*Although Aiden is not formally diagnosed with dyslexia, his parents have determined that this is why he struggles with reading, spelling, writing, and finding the right words when he is trying to explain something. Aiden's father admits that he had some difficulty in school as a young boy, but not to the same extent that Aiden has had difficulty. Aiden's father is very intelligent and has always been successful running his own business, but admits that he never felt as smart as the rest of his classmates when he was in school. He remembers having to work twice as hard as everyone else to maintain average grades. Even as an adult, Aiden's father says it takes him extra time to get through reading material, and that drafting emails to clients can be painfully slow because he struggles with spelling and finding the right words to convey his message. Now that he sees how much his son struggles, he realizes he used many coping strategies, when he was a child, to work around his difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling. Aiden's father made it through school with a lot of extra effort and persistence. He is worried that Aiden will not fare as well as he did. He doesn't want to see his son struggle with low achievement and low self-esteem. There is a part of him that wonders how different his life would be if someone had identified his learning disabilities when he was younger.*

This scenario is more common than you may realize. Dyslexia is hereditary and quite often parents come to the realization that they are dyslexic only because of the struggles they see in their own children. Dyslexia literally means "difficulty with language." Dyslexia is a specific

learning disability that is neurological in origin. It can affect reading, spelling, word retrieval, articulation, directionality, and the ability to remember certain facts. Individuals with dyslexia do not see things backwards, though they may reverse letters and numbers in writing. Despite common myths – people with dyslexia can read, but their reading may be slow and inaccurate if left untreated.

Current research has shown that students with dyslexia can be taught to read, write, and spell up to grade level, go to college, and live happy successful lives. What a relief for Aiden and his parents! Knowing the type of learning disability they're dealing with is half the battle.

### **How do you close the gap between your child's reading level and age/grade level?**

#### **Don't wait for the problem to go away.**

Children can be diagnosed with dyslexia as early as age five. The National Institute of Health reports that the optimal grades for intervention are kindergarten through first grade. Time is of the essence – especially when it comes to reading ability. Typically students make reading gains that are year for year. Every year a child is in school, they will make one year's gain in instructional reading level. That's great if the student is already reading at grade level. What happens when a student is reading 1-3 (or more) years below grade level? How do these students ever catch up? The longer an individual waits to get help, the harder it is for them to close the gap.

#### **Use an Orton Gillingham based reading program.**

Reading ability will not improve unless you use a research based reading program. Current research shows that students with dyslexia benefit most from Orton-Gillingham based, multisensory instruction in phonemic awareness and reading skills. This is why the International Dyslexia Association supports the Orton-Gillingham sequence and methodology as best practice when working with students who have dyslexia. Research also shows that 95% of reading failure is preventable when dyslexic students are given the right type of instruction. Furthermore, this is an exciting time in the field of dyslexia because brain imaging has shown that using the right type of reading intervention, with someone who is dyslexic, will actually "rewire" how the brain reads.

#### **Be patient and be positive.**

There is no silver bullet when it comes to overcoming dyslexia. It will take time, patience, and perseverance for your child to bring his/her reading up to grade level. At times it will be frustrating and you may even choose to hire a specialist who is trained in Orton Gillingham methods. This can be beneficial for several reasons. First, it can ease the tension that occurs when combining learning disabilities and working with your own children. Secondly, students will make faster progress working with someone who has years of expertise using Orton Gillingham methods. Thirdly, you will more have peace of mind and an ally who can support your efforts and offer guidance.

Targeted intervention will bridge the gap in your child's reading, writing, and spelling skills. But, that is only the beginning. It will also give your child hope, improved self-confidence, increased academic success, perseverance, and independence. Teaching children to work through learning disabilities should always be a character building experience. Imagine the possibilities! You can help your child close the gap in their reading level by learning more about dyslexia and Orton Gillingham based reading interventions.

### **10 Facts about Dyslexia**

1. Dyslexia is hereditary. Children with a dyslexic parent have a 50% chance of inheriting the disability.
2. Dyslexia affects on 1 in every 5 people in America.
3. Reading disabilities are estimated to comprise 80% of all learning disabilities.
4. 40% of individuals with dyslexia have the coexisting condition, ADD or ADHD.
5. Children are usually not identified as having a reading disability until the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
6. Children with dyslexia can be diagnosed as early as 5 years old.
7. Phonemic awareness is different from phonics and is the core and causal reason for reading problems.
8. Poor spelling ability is a symptom of dyslexia. Spelling has nothing to do with intelligence. Agatha Christie, Albert Einstein, and Ernest Hemingway were all horrible spellers!
9. Dyslexia is not a vision problem.
10. Individuals with dyslexia often have superior strengths in people skills, music, art, sports, creativity, visual perceptual skills, and critical thinking skills.