

Quality Instruction for Someone with Dyslexia

by Kathryn Starke

I am an elementary school reading specialist in a large public school system, so I have the opportunity to work with a large range of reading needs on a daily basis. For me, dyslexia is one of the most intriguing reading deficiencies I have studied. The children I serve with dyslexia range from first grade to fourth grade and are always some of my brightest students. They listen and learn all of our reading strategies with their peers and then have to process in their brain what that will look like for them when they read.

I have discovered several interventions that help my students in reading; they have all become successful independent readers at their grade level. The first thing we use is colored highlighter tape (usually yellow or lime green) in our reading materials. This colored overlay is easy to put on and take off any book, magazine, or printed paper of text. The color offsets the regular black and white images and triggers the brain to focus on this particular word or phrase.

Sometimes we place the tape on sight words such as *like*, *can*, or *see* so the reader can recognize these words with ease and automaticity. Other times, I will mark a new word so that the child can use regular word patterns to break apart and decode the word. If highlighter tape is too hard to come by, a yellow highlighter marker works fine. Think about how you used one to mark up your college textbooks to remember the most important information; your eyes were instantly drawn to those words on the page and you understood exactly what you were reading.

As in anything, you want to focus on what you know and build upon that knowledge; the same thing is true in reading. When decoding a word, long or short, I tell the student to look for “hidden words.” The child takes on the role of a reading detective and finds words hidden within larger words. For example, in the word *thermometer*, the student finds *the*, *mom*, and *meter*, easy words they have heard in conversation or in another subject, in this case, math. Once the child has found those “hidden words,” we put them together adding necessary sounds to build the word; all of a sudden this four syllable beast for a child has become an easily decodable word.

Another very similar strategy for our decoding is the idea of “chunking,” in which the children circle, underline, or highlight the parts of the words including blends, digraphs, vowel patterns, base words, prefixes, and suffixes. Dissecting a word apart enables the child to easily examine the parts that combine to make the whole word. All of these strategies are implemented in one-on-one and small group instruction until the child subconsciously utilizes them during independent reading. These “tricks” become second nature to the child, and reading becomes significantly easier and even more enjoyable for the youngster.

In my position, I often seek out fellow educators and experts in this field to learn more to best serve the needs of my students. The Dyslexia Training Institute in San Diego offers webinars for parents and teachers to obtain the best knowledge on this subject. In other instances, people contact me with products they believe will benefit people diagnosed with dyslexia. I met with someone from ChromaGen Vision (<http://www.ireadbetternow.com/>) who shared with me the outcomes they have seen from children using these lenses. I believe it is essential to know all of the resources that are available for our children and choose the ones that best fit that child’s needs.

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