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TTAC Region 4 at GMU

Ready, Set, Go Success for All

A news brief linking people and resources to support quality practices in the education of all students

Hands on!
Strategies and Technology: Dyslexia Part 2

Get Ready to become familiar with the components of a multi-sensory, structured approach to phonics instruction for students with dyslexia. While there is no one program or strategy that works for every student, there are several techniques that are considered to be best practice when providing instruction.

Frequent & Cumulative Review

Review of all previously taught sounds and spelling patterns, conducted at least 3 days a week, can help students maintain and build upon phonics skills. The review, sometimes called the "3-Part Drill" consists of encoding, blending and decoding activities such as visual drills, auditory drills, blending drills, (with CVC words or more complex spelling patterns) and vowel intensive drills.

Direct & Explicit Instruction of New Phonemes and Spelling Patterns
New phonemes or spelling patterns are introduced and taught in an explicit, multi-sensory way to help students form a sound-to-print connection. In addition to explicitly teaching the match between phonemes and print, concepts such as letter formation, voiced and voiceless phonemes, the difference between vowels and consonants and the place and manner of articulation can also be taught.

Instruction in Sight Words/Non-Decodable/Red Words
Students are provided specialized, multi-sensory strategies to learn high frequency words, often called red words, that either do not fit expected phonetic rules, or contain patterns they haven't learned yet.

Opportunities for Application
Students should be given frequent opportunities to practice reading and spelling of new and previously taught skills. This can be done by reading controlled, decodable text, and through the dictation process, which sometimes includes finger spelling or pounding and tapping.

Exposure to Language Activities and Phonemic Awareness
Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words, and is critical to reading success. Instruction should include activities to help build these skills.

Get Set to Investigate Assistive Technology!

Assistive Technology (AT) is used to improve or maintain functional capabilities, or in other words, to do what everyone else is doing. When decoding ability falls significantly below grade level, tools such as text-to-speech will allow the student to continue to access grade level content and access the curriculum. Text-to-speech can come in form of an app, specialized software, a browser extension, or a built-in accessibility feature of your device. Determining which option is the best choice for the student will require a consideration process. The school's AT team or specialist will consider what the student's strengths and needs are, what features they will require to accomplish their given tasks, the student's personal preferences, and any environmental factors. After selecting which tool's features and options will best match the student's needs, a trial period will be initiated, during which time, the school will measure whether the AT has been effective. This process may be iterated as many times as necessary.

Go check out the following resources! Select one of the multi-sensory activities or assistive technology options and give it a try.

Multi-Sensory Activities: Try sand writing, rhymes, songs, sensory bags, sensory instruction, sight word twister, or make sensory dough for practice activities.

Assistive Technology Options: If your student has an IEP and a documented print disability, they are eligible to apply for AIM-VA services, who can provide accessible text and instructional materials. Some examples of text-to-speech include Read & Write, Snap & Reader, Natural Reader, Voice Dream Reader app, or Reader Pen.

Online Resources:

- Understood.org: Multisensory Instruction: What you need to know
- Understood.org: 8 Multisensory Techniques for Teaching Reading
- International Dyslexia Association: Effective Reading Instruction
- International Dyslexia Association: Multisensory Structured Language Teaching Fact Sheet
- Reading Rockets: Phonics Instruction: The Value of a Multi-sensory Approach

Print Resources

Spear-Swerling, L. (2018). Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices: Understanding Differences to Create Instructional Opportunities. *Teaching Exceptional Children V 51*(3), 201-211.

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This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff at the VDOE TTAC at George Mason University. For questions about content, please contact Dr. Cindy Buckley (cbuckle8@gmu.edu) or Geoff Weber (gweber3@gmu.edu).