

## 34 TIPS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

**This is list of practical tips from HIDA members. Please note that these tips supplement - not replace - multisensory structured learning (MSL) programs and procedures to teach dyslexic children to read. Also, please remember the list is an “a la carte” menu – you can pick and choose things to try. Not every suggestion is necessary or appropriate for every child. HIDA hopes that sharing ideas will help parents and teachers assist their children with dyslexia.**

### 1. Reading is reading.

- a. Encourage reading of all kinds (comic books and graphic novels, subtitles in Japanese cartoons, “trashy” tabloids, etc.).
- b. Choose books for your child to read that are below his/her grade or age level. This helps build confidence and allows him/her to enjoy reading. Look in the back of the book for the grade level.
- c. Read books to your child that are higher than his/her grade level.
- d. Read books by Dr. Seuss. Dyslexic children have difficulty with rhyming words.

### 2. Audio books.

- a. Encourage your child to listen to audio books for pleasure.
- b. Let your child listen to audio books for school assignments.
- c. Have your child read along while listening to an audio book.
- d. Choose audio books for your child that are higher than his/her grade level.
- e. Download audio books from the Hawaii State Public Library at [www.librarieshawaii.org/services/ebooks.htm](http://www.librarieshawaii.org/services/ebooks.htm).
- f. Load audio books on his/her IPod.
- g. Listen to audio books together in the car on commutes and family vacations.
- h. Join *Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic* at <http://www.rfbd.org>.
- i. Join *Bookshare* at <http://www.bookshare.org>.
- j. Download free public domain audio books from <http://www.booksshouldbefree.com/> or <http://www.librophile.com/>.
- k. Join the Hawaii Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (402 Kapahulu Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96815; phone 733-8444), where you can borrow books on tape and the required tape players for free.

### 3. Reading tips.

- a. Have your child read aloud to himself/herself.
- b. Put a ruler or bookmark under text, or use a clear ruler with a “reading window,” to follow the lines of type when reading.
- c. Highlight every other line of text to follow the lines of type when reading.
- d. Read aloud and point to the words as you read them. Have your child follow the movement of your finger.
- e. Have two copies of the book so you can read side-by-side with your child.

### 4. It is not really a big deal if your child cannot:

- a. erase pencil markings cleanly and completely

- b. use scissors
- c. color inside the lines
- d. proofread his papers efficiently
- e. spell consistently

Dyslexic children often have difficulty with these tasks which, while seemingly important in school, have far less significance in the "real world." Remember, spelling and good handwriting are not moral virtues.

**5. It is not cheating to:**

- a. use an electronic dictionary
- b. use phonetic dictionaries such as *Gabby's Wordspeller*
- c. use a calculator
- d. use spell check
- e. type papers for your child
- f. ask teachers for written notes for lectures in advance (to follow along with the lecture)
- g. ask teachers for help (see Annex 1 for possible strategies)

These types of tools and strategies are used by adults daily. It takes a dyslexic child longer to complete school assignments. Using such tools and strategies can free up time and preserve energy for other substantive aspects of education.

**6. Play word games and activities.**

- a. Play PIG, HORSE, etc. in basketball. Use words your child has trouble learning.
- b. Play games like *Bananagrams* (like *Scrabble* but done as a team instead of individually) or *Hangman*.
- c. Use objects such as clay, *Legos*, or sand to "build" new words. This allows dyslexic children who are non-verbal thinkers to utilize a creative outlet to accomplish an otherwise frustrating task.
- d. Play *Jeopardy*-like games (using multiplication tables, names/capitals of states, etc) or rhyming games on car rides. Start when your child is very young, and he/she won't realize it's studying.
- e. Make up songs, poems, or dances to remember needed information. Multiplication tables or addresses can be sung; spelling of needed words can be made into a poem; the meaning of Latin roots can be expressed in a dance.

**7. Getting organized.**

- a. Show your child systems to:
  - i. keep track of homework assignments, test and project due dates.
  - ii. file notes, completed assignments, etc.
  - iii. quickly distinguish (in his/her folder) completed homework and other materials that have to be turned in to the teacher.
  - iv. how to use an appointment calendar or day planner.
- b. Use colors to organize as much as possible (e.g., colored post-its and folders).
- c. Get your child a laptop and help him/her organize a filing system for all assignments (keeps everything in one place).
- d. Display a laminated picture of how his/her desk is supposed to look when it is clean and organized, instead of repeatedly saying "clean your desk."
- e. Display a laminated picture of a proper table setting instead of repeatedly saying "the fork goes on the left."
- f. Give instructions in writing in the form of a checklist.
- g. Teach your child to make step-by-step lists of tasks (e.g., "brush your teeth, feed the dogs, put lunch money in wallet, etc."; or "check lost & found for P.E. shorts, ask math teacher about Problem #7,"

“sign up for basketball, etc.”). Keep the lists in the same place.

- h. Teach your child to remind himself/herself about things by promptly leaving himself voicemails or sending himself emails.
- i. Give your child options and let him/her decide which systems work best.

## 8. Textbooks.

- a. Get two sets of textbooks. Leave one set at school to take to class, and one set at home for studying and homework. This eliminates all sorts of “forgetting” problems. Some schools will loan extra books, but all will hold you responsible for lost or damaged books.
- b. Break up textbooks and rebind them by chapters to make them less intimidating.
- c. Color code textbooks to match notebooks and folders.
- d. Use audio versions of textbooks (see, *Kurzweil Education Systems, Reading for the Blind and Dyslexic*, and *Bookshare*).

## 9. Homework.

- a. In school find a study buddy. Help each other by studying together and exchanging classroom notes with one another.
- b. Ask the teacher to give assignments in writing (not to be copied from a chalk/writing board)
- c. Have your child use his/her cell phone to take a picture of assignments written on chalk/writing board)
- d. Have your child repeat the instructions out loud before he/she begins an assignment.
- e. If your child has to write an assignment, have him/her dictate it to you. Then he/she can re-copy it.
- f. If your child has to write an essay and do a related power-point presentation, have him/her do the power-point first (it can act as an outline for the essay).
- g. If your child has to write an essay, have him/her use *Inspiration* software ([www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)); it helps organize ideas and details, and generates an outline.
- h. If your child has problems keeping arithmetic columns in a line, use graph paper. If graph paper is not available, turn lined paper sideways.
- i. If your child asks how to spell a word, spell it for him/her. Or get him/her a phonetic and/or electronic dictionary.
- h. For long reading assignments, consider *Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic, Bookshare, Kurzweil Education Systems* software, and/or audio books from the local library. Even if your child uses recordings, make certain he/she reads along in the text. The next option is for someone to read to him/her. The third option is to take turns reading one paragraph at a time. However, sometimes when students read out loud, their energy goes into decoding the words and very little room is left for comprehension. Reading aloud can also slow the process down.
- k. Purchase an assignment notebook. Your child should to write down each assignment for each class each day. If there is no assignment then he/she should write “No Homework.”
- l. Have your child type using larger fonts or point sizes (can be adjusted when paper is complete)
- m. Teach your child that homework is not complete until your child puts everything into his/her backpack ready for school the next morning, and then turns it in to the teacher.

## 10. Computers.

- a. Get your child a laptop and help him/her organize a filing system for all assignments (keeps everything in one place).
- b. Have your child learn to type at an early age. Be sure they learn full finger typing, not hunt-and-peck. Try computer games for very young children that teach basics of typing, and *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing*.
- c. Use larger fonts or increase point size when copying information.
- d. Learn a computer language (many individuals with dyslexia are great at this).

## 11. Foreign language requirements.

- a. Take Latin - it is useful, teaches grammar, and is consistent with Orton-Gillingham instruction. It may be easier for dyslexic children to learn because many English words are Latin-based and roots will be familiar.
- b. Take Italian or Spanish - since they are Latin-based they are usually easier for dyslexic children to learn than other languages.
- c. Hawaiian is also a good language to consider because of the small alphabet and very phonetic structure.
- d. Take American Sign Language – it is often easier for dyslexic children to learn, and can provide real career opportunities.
- e. Check into college “entrance” requirements – will they accept American Sign Language or other credits instead of foreign language requirements?
- f. Consider taking foreign language in an “easier” school during the summer, or asking for a language waiver in a high school – some private schools have granted these.

## 12. Assistive technologies.

- a. *Kurzweil Education Systems* at [www.kurzweiledu.com](http://www.kurzweiledu.com) (scaffolded reading, writing, and study skills solutions for struggling learners, including text-to-speech software).
- b. *Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Readers* (K-Reader Mobile Products) at [www.knfbreader.com/index.php](http://www.knfbreader.com/index.php) (text-to-speech software loaded into a KNFB Reader Camera or Nokia N82 cell phone enables the individual to take pictures of text that in read in synthetic speech – i.e., text-to-speech)
- c. *ClaroRead* at <http://www.clarosoftware.com/> (text-to-speech software)
- d. *Read & Write Gold* at <http://www.readwritegold.com/> (text-to-speech software)
- e. *WYNN Literacy* software at [www.freedomscientific.com/LSG/products/wynn.asp](http://www.freedomscientific.com/LSG/products/wynn.asp) (text-to-speech software)
- f. *Intel Reader* at [www.intel.com/healthcare/reader/index.htm](http://www.intel.com/healthcare/reader/index.htm) (portable hand-held text-to-speech)
- g. *Reading Pens* at [www.readingpen.com](http://www.readingpen.com) (portable, text-to-speech)
- h. *Iris Pen Scanner* at <http://www.irislink.com/c2-1052-189/IRISPen-scanner---Ideal-pen-scanner-for-printed-text-retyping-.aspx> (portable, hand-held scanner)
- i. *Wizcom Technologies* at [www.wizcomtech.com](http://www.wizcomtech.com) (portable, hand-held scanner)
- j. *Dragon Naturally Speaking* at [www.nuance.com/talk/](http://www.nuance.com/talk/) (speech-to-text software)
- k. *IBM ViaVoice* at [http://www-01.ibm.com/software/pervasive/embedded\\_viavoice](http://www-01.ibm.com/software/pervasive/embedded_viavoice) (speech-to-text dictation software)
- l. *Inspiration* software at [www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com) (graphic organizer software)
- m. *LiveScribe Smart Pens* at [www.livescribe.com](http://www.livescribe.com) (note-taking and recording pen)
- n. *Kindle* at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (text-to-speech feature)
- o. *Franklin Electronics* at [www.franklin.com](http://www.franklin.com) (portable “talking” spelling checkers, dictionaries, thesauruses, translators)
- p. *Co:Writer* at <http://www.donjohnston.com/products/cowriter/index.html> (interprets spelling and grammar mistakes and offers word suggestions)
- q. *WordQ* at <http://www.wordq.com/> (suggests words to use and provides spoken feedback to help find mistakes)
- r. Visit Assistive Technology Resource Centers of Hawai‘i (ATRC) at [www.atrc.org](http://www.atrc.org) (532-7110)
- s. Attend HIDA’s *Amazing Technologies* Workshop

## 13. Write and talk to your child’s teachers at the beginning of each school year:

- a. Educate them about dyslexia - assume they know little or nothing about the subject.
- b. Enclose the HIDA dyslexia brochure and “Teachers’ Checklist.”

- c. Invite them to a “dyslexia simulation” (see Item 24).
- d. Give specific examples of how your child’s dyslexia may affect him/her in the classroom (e.g., difficulty copying assignments from the blackboard, reading aloud, taking notes, spelling, calculations without a calculator, etc.)
- e. Discuss the list of “Things to not say or do” in Item 19.
- f. Ask them to tell you if your child is having difficulty with class work or homework, or with other students.
- g. Tell them you will be helping your child by typing reports, reading out loud to him/her, etc.
- h. If reading out loud in front of others humiliates your child, ask the teacher to substitute other tasks.
- i. Keep records of your interactions with teachers and schools, and learn the rules of the educational system so that you can advocate for your child.
- j. Be prepared to have the same conversations over and over each year, as your child has new teachers who need to be educated about dyslexia.
- k. Remember to thank them early and often.
- l. See sample letter attached as Annex 2.

**14. Special procedures to facilitate learning.**

- a. Advocate for your child, and explain to your child what you are saying/doing and WHY, so he/she will learn how to advocate for himself/herself.
- b. Consider asking your child’s teachers and school for special procedures to facilitate your child’s learning. Examples are listed in Annex 1. Not all of the procedures will be appropriate or available in each instance, and the list is not exhaustive. It is intended to give parents ideas to discuss with teachers and schools.

**15. Multisensory Structured Learning (MSL).**

- a. Find schools with MSL trained teachers in early elementary school programs.
- b. Find public schools with DOE MSL programs.
- c. Consider private MSL tutoring.
- d. While it is preferable to have another MSL trained educator work with your child, if this is not an option (or to supplement the work done by that person), consider getting trained in MSL strategies to help teach your child to read, write and spell.

**16. Have your child assessed by the DOE, a psychologist or private testing/assessment organization.**

- a. If your child is assessed as eligible for special education services, he/she may have the opportunity to participate in a DOE MSL program, or to receive certain remediation from the DOE.
- b. If your child has a special education or specific learning disability assessment, let the school and teachers know. Even if your child attends a private school that may not be equipped to provide remediation, your child may be entitled to reasonable accommodation. See Item 15 above for possible sources of remediation. See Annex 1 for possible accommodation. The school may require formal determination of required accommodation from a professional.
- c. Private school children may qualify for DOE assessment and possibly DOE private school special education projects. Assessment and participation is arranged through the school the child would be attending if he/she was in public school.
- d. Take advantage of programs (e.g., tutoring, student services, seminars) that are offered by the DOE.

**17. Take a workshop from Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii (LDAH).**

Currently, the DOE assesses for "specific learning disability," which includes dyslexia. LDAH, Hawaii’s Parent Training and Information Center, holds small group sessions and larger educational workshops to help parents of children with special needs to learn about their child’s disability, understand laws supportive to children with disabilities and prepare for Individualized Education

Program (IEP) meetings with the child's school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Individualized assistance for parents is also available by phone, via email or in one-to-one mentoring sessions. To meet the most critical needs, LDAH also provides case advocacy. LDAH contact information is available on its website at [www.LDAHawaii.org](http://www.LDAHawaii.org), or call 808-536-9684.

**18. Speech therapy.**

If your child needs speech therapy, apply for an assessment and services from the University of Hawaii speech clinic (free of charge). Other possibilities might include services for very young children (0 – 3 years old) from the Hawaii Department of Health, DOE special education preschool services, Scottish Rite Preschool for speech disorders, the Elks Club Service project and private speech therapy.

**19. Things to not say or do:**

- a. "This is easy."
- b. Put unhappy faces on his/her paper.
- c. "Get your act together and learn to do it right."
- d. "You're just not applying yourself."
- e. "Try harder."
- f. "You knew it yesterday."
- f. Humiliate him/her in front of the entire class.
- g. Say in front of the entire class that "everyone is dismissed except for \_\_\_\_."
- h. "If you never learn to read or write you will never make it."
- i. First ask the question, then call his/her name for a response (i.e., don't catch him/her by surprise).

**20. Transitions.**

- a. Plan for transitions (especially for entry into middle school, high school or college).
- b. If needed, take off the first week of each school year to help your child transition to his/her classes.
- c. Growth spurts, hormonal and other changes can create temporary "set-backs" in things like organizational skills. Take a deep breath and start again – your child will get back on track.

**21. Read *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz (also available as an audiobook).**

**22. Check out these websites with information dyslexia, learning disabilities in general, etc.:**

- a. [www.Idonline.org](http://www.Idonline.org) ("all-around" website sponsored by WETA (public broadcasting), Washington, D.C., in association with the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities).
- b. [www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds) (collaborative effort between PBS and WGBH Education Foundation, presenting some of Mel Levine's work presented in ways easy to comprehend).
- c. <http://www.allkindsofminds.org/learningBase.aspx> (Mel Levine's website on understanding learning problems and identifying relevant interventions).
- d. [www.interdys.org/index.jsp](http://www.interdys.org/index.jsp) (International Dyslexia Association website)
- e. [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov) (National Institute for Literacy is a federal organization that shares information about literacy and supports the development of high-quality literacy services so all Americans can develop essential basic skills. Lots of research-based information can be found here; click on "*Partnership for Reading*" logo at the bottom of the page to access free research-based reports on literacy development).
- f. [www.LD.org](http://www.LD.org) (National Center for Learning Disabilities website).
- g. [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org) (Council for Exceptional Children: Special Education (generic) website).
- h. <http://www.childrenofthecode.org> (website addressing "the code and the challenge of learning to read.")

**23. Consider attending conferences and symposia to listen to experts and learn about new ideas and cutting edge techniques.**

- a. HIDA professional development conferences
- b. International Dyslexia Association annual conference at [www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)
- c. Brain and Learning Conference at [www.edupr.com](http://www.edupr.com)

**24. Dyslexia simulations.**

- a. Attend HIDA's *Dyslexia Simulations Workshop*. With more insight into the challenges your child faces, you may be better able to assist him/her in finding "work-arounds" for his/her difficulties.
- b. See the simulation located at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingdiffs.html>.

**25. Join or form a parent support group so you can encourage each other, and share information and experiences.**

**26. Identify famous people with dyslexia. Expose your child to role models.**

Albert Einstein	Thomas Edison	Leonardo da Vinci	Andy Warhol
Charles Schwab	James Earl Jones	Bruce Jenner	Pablo Picasso
Greg Louganis	Magic Johnson	Jackie Stewart	Will Smith
Erin Brockovich	Jay Leno	Henry Ford	Avi
Salma Hayek	Richard Branson	Whoopi Goldberg	Agatha Christie
Orlando Bloom	Danny Glover	Henry Winkler	Jewel
George S. Patton	Ansel Adams	Dwight D. Eisenhower	Robert Kennedy
Alexander Graham Bell	John Lennon	Terry Bradshaw	David Murdock

**27. Take a "mental health day." Kick back and have fun with your child after a difficult part of the quarter or term.**

**28. Give your child time, every day, to do whatever he/she does best - running, skating, drawing, singing, etc. Don't prohibit your child from doing a fun activity as punishment for poor academic success.**

**29. Encourage your child to keep private journals – to express himself/herself without being graded or judged. If your child dislikes writing, she/he could record a journal orally.**

**30. Look for the gifts in your child – his/her dyslexia is "a weakness in a sea of strengths."**

**31. Don't fixate on fears of your child being "labeled" as dyslexic. It is often a great relief for a child to finally have a name for their situation, and to realize it is shared with many other people.**

**32. Say "I love you" every day.**

Often children with dyslexia are singled out daily. Many are laughed at for making mistakes or being "stupid." Those three words of comfort should come from those who love them unconditionally.

**33. Trust your instincts – you know your child best.**

**34. Get over it - it's about them, not you.**

**35. BONUS**

- a. Get a free copy of the *Resource Guide about Dyslexia for People in Hawaii* written by HIDA Board member, Kathy Ferguson, Ph.D.
- b. Visit HIDA online at <http://www.dyslexia-hawaii.org>; or contact HIDA at [hida@dyslexia-hawaii.org](mailto:hida@dyslexia-hawaii.org); or call 538-7007 or toll free from neighbor islands, 1-866-773-4432.
- c. Join us at HIDA. We can all share ideas, insights and hope, and work together to improve education and services for children, youth and adults with dyslexia.

## Annex 1 SPECIAL PROCEDURES

Things you may want to discuss with your child's teachers or school:

1. Allow use of a pocket calculator to assist with basic calculations your child learns higher level math concepts.
2. Allow your child to count on fingers while doing math and or sub vocalize while reading.
3. Partial credit if your child's mathematical procedures were correct, but the answer was incorrect due to errors in computations.
4. Do not require them to always show their work.
5. Read word problems aloud.
6. Minimize drill, repetition and rote memorization.
7. Minimize timed tests.
8. Give your child advance notice so that he/she can practice at home or after school before being called on to read aloud in class; or not requiring your child to read aloud.
9. Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts.
10. Shorten spelling tests to focus on mastering the most functional words.
11. Substitute alternatives for written assignments (posters, oral/taped or video presentations, projects, collages, etc.).
12. Seat student close to teacher in order to monitor understanding.
13. Provide a print outline with videotapes and filmstrips.
14. Grade only for content not spelling or handwriting – give more weight to content than format.
15. Allow student to use a keyboard if handwriting is poor.
16. Allow student to dictate answer to essay questions.
17. Reduce copying tasks.
18. Give your child a written copy of homework instructions.
19. Give lecture notes to your child before the class so he/she can highlight them beforehand. Then he/she can work on listening instead of concentrating on the note taking itself.
20. Send homework and instructions by email.
21. Extra time to complete projects, term papers, book reports, etc.
22. Extra time to complete a test.
23. Allow your child to dictate test answers.
24. Allow the test to be read to your child.
25. Allow your child to give oral answers to essay questions.
26. Allow misspelling and grammar errors and grade the content.
27. Allow rephrasing of test questions.
28. Allow use of electronic dictionaries, books on tape, spellchecker, etc.
29. Allow student to observe others before attempting a new task.
30. When you ask the child a question in front of the class, say his/her name first so he/she knows the question is coming up.

**Remember, every child and teacher is different. Explore possibilities.**



Annex 2  
SAMPLE LETTER TO TEACHERS

**NOTE: NOT EVERYTHING IN THE SAMPLE WILL APPLY TO EACH CHILD. WE HAVE “LOADED” THE LETTER TO GIVE YOU IDEAS. HOWEVER, WHEN YOU WRITE YOUR LETTER, YOU SHOULD PICK KEY POINTS SO THE TEACHER IS NOT OVERWHELMED, BUT REMEMBER TO GIVE ENOUGH DETAILS SO THE TEACHER KNOWS WHAT TO LOOK FOR.]**

[DATE]

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR ADDRESS]

RE: [NAME OF YOUR CHILD]

Dear YYY:

XXX is our son. We are writing because we are not certain whether the administration has told you XXX has dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning difference [YOUR CALL ON WHETHER TO SAY “DISABILITY” – I USE “DISABILITY” FOR IMPACT, BUT SOME ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THAT] caused by neuro-anatomical and neuro-chemical differences in the brain. People with dyslexia, like XXX, are intelligent, yet they can have great difficulty reading, writing, organizing, remembering, and expressing their thoughts clearly. Enclosed for your information is a brochure prepared by the Hawai’i Branch of the International Dyslexia Association with information about dyslexia and its common characteristics.

Also enclosed is Dr. ZZZ’s evaluation of XXX for your information. We hope you will have time to take a look at it, as we think it will explain certain “inconsistencies” you may notice in XXX’s skills.

We did not know about XXX’s dyslexia until he was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and we discovered he had been using a large vocabulary and context to “fake” reading. He has been working with a language tutor for \_\_\_ years and that has helped tremendously.<sup>1</sup> However, he still reads laboriously, stumbles when reading out loud and has trouble sounding out words with more than two syllables.

XXX’s dyslexia shows up in other ways. He still has difficulty copying text from the board, taking accurate notes, understanding lengthy, detailed verbal instructions, remembering phone numbers, looking up words in the dictionary), confusing mathematical signs, etc. He sometimes confuses “sequencing words” like before/after, front/back, afternoon/morning (primarily when speaking). He has great difficulty learning foreign language phrases (sounding words out phonetically is a fundamental problem for dyslexic children). He does his homework, but sometimes “forgets” to turn it in. He has difficulty organizing his work areas. His “spontaneous spelling” (i.e., not spelling tests) remains inconsistent at best, and he has difficulty articulating his thoughts verbally and in writing (it takes him a while to retrieve the right words). We continue to work on these issues and, this year, are focusing primarily on writing.

So, we want to confirm that it is okay for us to help XXX on his projects and, in particular, his research and writing assignments. We are careful not to do the work for him. However, we work with him on organization,

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<sup>1</sup> Attached is dyslexia simulation from the PBS website which can give you an idea of how XXX “sees” written language and how he has to “decode” the symbols he sees in order to read. The method used to by his language tutor, multisensory structured language instruction, breaks down language into phonetic pieces, gives the student language “rules” to memorize, and uses multiple senses to facilitate his or her learning.

analysis, sentence structure, choice of words, etc. and have him rewrite and edit repeatedly. So, obviously, those assignments will read better than if he did them completely on his own (e.g., left to his own devices he would struggle with organization, and would not repeatedly edit). Please let us know if that is not acceptable and if XXX is required to work without assistance. However, we would prefer to be able to help “teach him to write” as he has improved over the past year with this level of guidance.

Finally, although Dr. ZZZ has recommended we ask for “accommodations” for XXX, we do not plan to do so at this time. XXX says he does not want to be treated differently from the other children and we told him that is okay for now. However, we will revisit this periodically, as XXX may at some point need extra time on exams, etc.

We are sharing much of this information because before we knew XXX had dyslexia, he was “punished” at his prior school for things he simply could not do (e.g., he was told he could not go to the Christmas party because he could not memorize “Here Comes Santa Claus” in Hawaiian, and often had to stay in during recesses and after school because he could not copy his assignments quickly enough from the blackboard). It was a bad time for XXX and he was humiliated by these very public “failures.” So, we like to point out these issues in advance, and ask that you keep in mind that XXX is a bright child who is generally pretty obedient and diligent, so if he cannot seem to do a required task, it is probably not for lack of trying.

Please feel free to call if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this, and we look forward to another challenging year of school.

Sincerely,

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[YOUR NAME]  
[YOUR PHONE NUMBER]

#### OTHER SECTIONS:

[ESPECIALLY FOR MATH TEACHER: Fortunately, XXX’s dyslexia has not affected his math skills much. He is, for reasons noted above, slow in reading word problems and makes manual calculation errors because of his writing inaccuracy. The latter causes him to often be more accurate doing, e.g., some of the steps in solving an algebra problem in his head, rather than on paper (i.e., if he writes out every step, he is more likely to transpose a number or symbol). I am not certain about geometry; I have heard it can be difficult for people with dyslexia.]

[ESPECIALLY FOR P.E. TEACHER: XXX’s dyslexia also affects his skills in sports. For example, his “reaction time” is a little slower than you might expect – it takes him longer to analyze what is going on around him in, e.g., a basketball game. Also, coaching instructions sometimes have to be broken down and explained a bit more, and where possible, demonstrated to him. The broken-down coaching instructions become his “rules,” and demonstrations make the coaching “multisensory.” Conceptually, this is basically the same multisensory structured approach being used to teach XXX to read. It works - he is becoming a very good basketball player.]

## DYSLEXIA SIMULATION

### A. DECODING LANGUAGE

- **Phonemes** are the component sounds of spoken words. The word goat is made up of three phonemes: /g/, /ō/, and /t/.
- Reading requires the ability to match phonemes we hear with letters on a page. This is called **decoding**.

### B. STUDY THIS CODE:

When you see:

Pronounce it as:

q

d or t

z

m

p

b

b

p

ys

er

a (as in bat)

e (as in pet)

e (as in pet)

a (as in bat)

### C. NOW READ THIS VERSE:

We pegin our qrib eq a faziliar blace, a poqy like yours enq zine.

Iq conqains a hunqraq qrillion calls qheq work qogaqhys py qasign.

Now qhink apouq qhe way you woulq qhink if qhose calls wyse qhe calls in your prain.

D. DECODED, IT SAYS:

We begin our trip at a familiar place, a body like yours and mine.  
It contains a hundred trillion cells that work together by design.  
Now think about the way you would think if those cells were the cells in your brain.

E. IN THE ABOVE VERSE, ONLY 7 OF THE 44 KNOWN PHONEMES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARE DISGUISED (CODED).

F. **DYSLEXIC CHILDREN MUST “CRACK THE CODE” IN ORDER TO READ.**

(This, and the previous page, are adapted from *Misunderstood Minds*, a collaboration between PBS and WGBH Education Foundation, at [www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingdiffs.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingdiffs.html))