



Speaking with One Voice: A Guide to Talking about Dyslexia

When we speak with a clear and consistent voice about the difficulties facing those with dyslexia, our message is far more likely to be heard and understood by education leaders, policymakers and others in a position to bring about change. Whether you are a parent advocating for your child, a teacher seeking more support for dyslexic students, an advocate working to change policy (or all three!), the talking points below will help you dispel misconceptions about dyslexia and ensure all dyslexic children and adults have the support they need to succeed.

How to describe dyslexia:

- ✓ Dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in reading in relation to an individual's higher level of intelligence. While those with dyslexia are slow readers, they also, paradoxically, are often very fast and creative thinkers.
- ✓ Dyslexia is a difficulty appreciating the individual sounds in spoken language. It affects a person's ability to rapidly retrieve the word he or she wants to say, to isolate the sounds within a spoken word and then to attach the appropriate letter to the sound. Those with dyslexia struggle to read fluently, spell words correctly and to learn a second language. Dyslexia is not reversing letters.
- ✓ Some of the most successful people in their fields have dyslexia, including well-known writers and artists, brilliant scientists, doctors and attorneys, and government and business leaders.
- ✓ Dyslexia is life-long, affecting 20 percent of the population and representing 80-90 percent of all those with learning disabilities.

Identifying dyslexia:

- ✓ Screening for and diagnosing dyslexia is practically non-existent in public schools, particularly in low-income communities. If children with dyslexia are not identified, they will never receive evidence-based interventions and accommodations that will change their lives for the better.
- ✓ Teacher education programs provide little if any training on identifying and supporting dyslexic students.

Identifying dyslexia (continued):

- ✓ Many school districts resist naming dyslexia as a specific disability, making it harder to identify and help dyslexic kids.
- ✓ The Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen identifies students at risk of dyslexia and is now available for use in classrooms nationwide through www.pearsonclinical.com.

Dyslexia and the reading achievement gap:

- ✓ Dyslexia likely is a significant reason for the persistent reading achievement gap in children from all backgrounds, especially low-income African-American and Hispanic children.
- ✓ Children with dyslexia who aren't diagnosed often grow up thinking they are stupid and that school is not a place for them. As a consequence, they have higher rates of dropout, unemployment, anxiety and depression. Studies estimate that almost 50 percent of prison inmates have dyslexia.

Helping those with dyslexia:

- ✓ Early identification of dyslexia should be followed by evidence-based interventions and accommodations. Evidence-based interventions are reading programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness through double-blind, controlled randomized studies. Research-based is not the same as evidence-based!
- ✓ Accommodations allow children (or adults) with dyslexia to demonstrate their true ability. They include offering extra time on tests, permitting use of calculators, providing note-takers and making speech-to-text or text-to-speech technology readily available.
- ✓ Interventions should focus on the whole child so that those with dyslexia not only learn to read, but develop self-awareness about who they are and what it means to be dyslexic.
- ✓ Supportive dyslexia-embracing school environments should help students understand that their dyslexia has nothing to do with intelligence and should empower them to realize their potential.



Raising awareness about how to effectively address dyslexia:

- ✓ Use the word dyslexia and avoid lumping together dyslexia with other learning disabilities. It is a unique condition that needs to be addressed with specific evidence-based interventions.
- ✓ Help dispel myths about dyslexia so educators and others appreciate that smart people can be poor readers.
- ✓ Check out the YCDC Parent and Teacher Toolkits at www.dyslexia.yale.edu to find out how you can raise awareness through school events, contests and other activities.

Promoting a hopeful vision for those with dyslexia:

- ✓ All those with dyslexia should have the opportunity to become better readers, to know and understand their diagnosis, and to become confident and successful students and adults.
- ✓ Every child should be screened for dyslexia and those at risk should be tested. If identified with dyslexia they should be given the instruction they need to become proficient readers.
- ✓ No child should give up on school because dyslexia was not identified and treated.
- ✓ We should recognize and embrace those with dyslexia as often among the most intelligent and creative members of society.



– Talking about the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity (YCDC) –

The work of YCDC, including its scientific research, resources and advocacy, is a driving force behind efforts to improve awareness, understanding and support of those with dyslexia.

As advocates and ambassadors for the Center, we encourage you to use the following descriptions and messages when talking about YCDC or referencing it in any written materials:

- ✓ **Mission Statement** – Our mission is to increase awareness of dyslexia and its true nature, specifically to illuminate the creative and intellectual strengths of those with dyslexia, to disseminate the latest scientific research and practical resources, and to transform the treatment of all dyslexic children and adults.
- ✓ **Elevator speech** – YCDC is the preeminent source of cutting-edge research, informed advocacy and trustworthy resources aimed at increasing understanding and support for those with dyslexia. Under the leadership of Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz, the Center created a framework for a scientifically-supported 21st century understanding of dyslexia as an unexpected difficulty in reading in relation to an individual's higher level of intelligence. The Center's tools and resources are used widely by parents, educators and those with dyslexia to advocate for greater recognition and help for dyslexic children and adults. YCDC builds awareness in all communities and mobilizes grassroots efforts to close the reading achievement gap for low-income students of color through policies that help dyslexic children succeed. To demonstrate the potential of those with dyslexia, the Center showcases the remarkable success stories of dyslexic adults, including writers, scientists, celebrities and government and business leaders.
- ✓ **Boilerplate** – The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity (YCDC) is the preeminent source of cutting-edge research, informed advocacy and trustworthy resources to help those with dyslexia reach their full potential. The Center's tools and resources are used widely by parents, educators and those with dyslexia to advocate for greater recognition and support for dyslexic children and adults. YCDC builds awareness in all communities and mobilizes grassroots efforts to close the reading achievement gap for low-income students of color through policies that help dyslexic children succeed. The Center also showcases the remarkable success stories of adults with dyslexia, including writers, scientists, celebrities and government and business leaders. For more information visit us at www.dyslexia.yale.edu.

