

# Widening the Circle

## *Celebrating Neurodiversity in Faith Based Schools*

### **Focus Strategy: Dyslexia**

Dyslexia is a neurobiological learning disability that affects a person's ability to read, write, and spell. It is not related to intelligence, and individuals with dyslexia have normal or above-average intelligence. Dyslexia can impact various aspects of a person's life, including academic performance, work, and social relationships. It is important to understand the characteristics of dyslexia in order to provide appropriate support and interventions.

According to the International Dyslexia Association, dyslexia affects about 20% of the population and is one of the most common learning disabilities. It can manifest differently in individuals, with symptoms ranging from difficulty recognizing letters and sounds to challenges with reading fluency and comprehension. Dyslexia can also co-occur with other learning disabilities, such as dysgraphia and dyscalculia. Early detection and intervention are key in helping individuals with dyslexia succeed.

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### **The Neurology of Dyslexia**

Imagine the brain as a complex network of superhighways with information zooming back and forth at lightning speeds. Now, picture the occipital temporal lobe as a critical junction where words are mapped and processed. In the dyslexic brain, this superhighway may have some unique roadblocks and detours that affect how words are perceived and understood. When a person with dyslexia reads, these roadblocks can create challenges in decoding and recognizing words, impacting their reading fluency and comprehension. Understanding this neurology can provide valuable insights into the experiences of individuals with dyslexia and help us tailor effective interventions and support strategies to enhance their learning experience.

### **The Myths and Facts**

There are many myths surrounding dyslexia, a learning disorder that affects a person's ability to read, write, and spell. One common myth is that dyslexia is simply a result of laziness or lack of intelligence. In reality, dyslexia is a neurological condition that can impact individuals of all levels of intelligence. Another myth is that people with dyslexia see letters and words backwards. While this can sometimes occur, it is not the defining characteristic of dyslexia. Dyslexia is actually a language-based disorder that affects a person's ability to decode words, recognize phonemes, and understand the meaning of what they are reading.



## Early Identification is Key!

The following screeners can be used to identify students at risk for dyslexia.

### 1. The Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST)

- Description: A free tool that assesses phonological awareness, a critical skill often lacking in individuals with dyslexia. This is useful for screening students in educational settings.
- Website: [PAST Test](#)

### 1. International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Screening Tools & Checklists

- Description: IDA provides several checklists and screeners for parents and educators to help identify dyslexic tendencies. Though not diagnostic, these tools are a starting point for recognizing early signs of dyslexia.
- Website: [International Dyslexia Association](#)

### 1. Dyslexia Toolkit by Understood.org

- Description: A comprehensive toolkit with screening resources and checklists for educators and parents. The toolkit includes activities and signs to look for to identify potential dyslexia.
- Website: [Understood Dyslexia Toolkit](#)

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## Resources:

[What is dyslexia video](#)

[DyslexiaHelp \(University of Michigan\)](#)

- Description: A free resource with research-based information, tools, and support strategies for people with dyslexia.

[Dyslexia Foundation](#)

- Description: Promotes research and provides programs to help people with dyslexia, along with resources for parents, educators, and researchers.
- Link: [DyslexiaFoundation.org](#)

[Pre-Time PD Understanding Dyslexia Parts I and II](#)

## Parent Connection:

Partnering with parents is essential when a student has dyslexia.

- Collect data on challenges a student may be having and share with parents as early as possible to develop an intervention plan.
- Be transparent about the supports the school can provide and if collaboration with specialists outside the school community will be beneficial.

