

GHCDS Language Learning Center Frequently Asked Questions

What is Orton-Gillingham?

Orton-Gillingham is a structured, language-based approach intended for use with persons who have difficulty with reading, spelling, and writing of the sort associated with dyslexia. It is multisensory, diagnostic and prescriptive, direct, explicit, structured and sequential. It is most properly understood and practiced as an approach, not a method, program, system or technique. In the hands of a well-trained and experienced instructor, it is a powerful tool of exceptional breadth, depth, and flexibility. It is cognitive and based on research about brain function, and the most effective teaching and learning principles and practices. Cursive handwriting is usually taught as it provides strong kinesthetic reinforcement, and allows those individuals who have confused manuscript formations, an opportunity to begin again.

Learn more: <http://www.ortonacademy.org/approach.php>

Why is Orton-Gillingham Effective?

Research shows that the most effective intervention is “*Structured Literacy*” that is multisensory in nature. It highlights the most predictable language structures and teaches them in a cumulative explicit way and provides students with tools to actively and independently decode and encode words in an explicit, systematic manner. This approach not only helps students with dyslexia, but there is substantial evidence that it is more effective for *all* readers as its principles and procedures model best teaching principles and practices and can easily be adapted to the regular classroom. The Orton-Gillingham Approach is the approach from which other structured language approaches were developed.

Over how long a time period should Orton-Gillingham instruction take place?

The most effective intervention takes place every day for forty-five to sixty minutes, over two to three years. Two years is usually enough to learn the basic structures of language, while a third year better assures internalization of skills and practice with independent application.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability that affects one in five people. It is not a question of intelligence and in fact dyslexics and their family members may have exceptional abilities. It is neurobiological in nature with the primary difficulty being at the phonological level. Its severity differs on a continuum from slight to severe affecting few to many areas of language processing; it lasts a lifetime although the issues change. 20% of the population will have some form of learning difficulty, and 80% of those will have difficulties learning to read.

It is not unusual for one with dyslexia to also have ADHD, or to be dyscalculic, or dysgraphic as it is considered comorbid in nature where there are other difficulties that may exist.

Learn more: <https://dyslexiaida.org/ida-dyslexia-handbook/>

Why does dyslexia occur?

Luckily we are all endowed with cerebral diversity. This allows for personal differences and the abilities to creatively solve problems and express ourselves; not to mention survival of

the species. Despite what many think, we are not hardwired to read—it is a cultural invention—and unlike speech there is no reading circuit. Every time someone learns to read, they are creating a reading circuit that did not exist and are actually suppressing areas in the brain most typically used for other functions. Some create reading brains more readily than others.

Learn more: <http://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2015/10/01/understanding-dyslexia-and-the-reading-brain-in-kids/>

When should a learner be evaluated? At what age can dyslexia be identified?

A screening should be conducted as soon as there are warning signs. With early intervention 50% to as high as 90% of the population can look like they never had issues learning to read. We can identify dyslexia or at least the warning signs, as early as preschool by looking at the family history. If a parent had difficulties learning to read and spell, there is a 40-60% chance that the child will too, as it is hereditary and has a biological basis.

Learn more: <https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/>

What are warning signs of dyslexia?

Early warning signs begin with a family history of dyslexia; there is a 40-60% chance, that if a parent is dyslexic, so will a child be.

Also difficulty:

- learning to speak or correctly sequencing the sounds in words (bsgetti/spaghetti, pacific/specific with graphomotor and fine motor control (awkward pencil grip),
- learning to tie shoes
- telling left from right
- learning color names and shapes
- remembering sequences of events; altercations on the play ground—may truly be confused about what happened first
- understanding temporal concepts such as before and after
- rhyming, identifying words that have the same sounds, or deleting sounds and syllables
- learning rote sequences like the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year and counting
- remembering /learning letter formations
- learning letter sound/correspondences

By grade one:

- difficulty understanding the alphabetic principle; the idea that words are made up of individual sounds that get blended together to form a word
- learning to read
- spelling lacks resemblance to letter sound correspondences

Why is a diagnostic evaluation important?

An evaluation is important to design the best and most appropriate intervention to meet a learner's needs. It can be harmful and cause unnecessary blows to self-esteem to intervene

when the learning issues are not clearly identified. Trying different techniques that do not work can leave a learner feeling unnecessarily defeated, and that there is something hopelessly wrong with them when interventions are tried and don't work because they are inappropriate. An assessment also helps provide documentation of learning issues and services given, should accommodations be required for standardized testing during the upper school years.

Learn more: <https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/>

As a private school, how does GHCDs honor IEP's?

Because a private school does not typically receive government funding, it is not mandated to honor IEP's as they do not always have the specialized services. At GHCDs, we do recognize that people learn differently and are willing to do our best to support the needs of our learners and diversify instruction to the extent we can. Therefore it is important that if there is an IEP, it is shared so we can evaluate the extent to which we can offer services. Typically we conduct a skills assessment and work in conjunction with the IEP to design a program that will best meet a learner's needs. It is essential to disclose this information if we are to work together to create the most conducive learning environment.

As a parent, how can I support my dyslexic child?

- Keep positive and demonstrate your faith (not your anxiety) that in the end, all will be ok
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Start everyday anew
- Foster strengths and celebrate abilities as it is documented that many dyslexics and their family members have particular strengths in areas that are not focused on reading and writing; gifts that are present because of the dyslexia
- Find a dyslexia specialist who can talk expertly with your child about what dyslexia to "de-mystify" the idea that something is wrong
- Remind your child that their skills will improve bit by bit, over time and that persistence is important. In order to develop any ability, you must practice and reading is no different
- Read aloud with your child every day
- Keep expectations high—dyslexia is not about a lack of intelligence or ability, but difficulty developing a reading brain
- Stop doing homework when it has gotten to be too much; emphasize it is not about trying harder but learning to develop effective strategies to do the work
- Learn as much as you can about dyslexia so that you can support and be an advocate for your child

Does one outgrow dyslexia?

One does not outgrow dyslexia; once dyslexic, you are always dyslexic, but the issues may change. For example, once in high school, reading words may not be the issue, but rate may still be slow, making it difficult to keep up with reading demands.