

Parent Dyslexia Action Plan

Here's how to get started

Remember: no matter how hard this is, it is imperative to maintain open lines of communication between your child, your school and yourself. Sometimes you may need to get an advocate to help you. Parents, take care of yourselves. Many families have experienced what you or your child is going through.

Don't panic. It is not you or your child's fault. It is very well documented that Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) affect many children worldwide. "Dyslexia is an alternative term used to refer to a pattern of learning difficulties characterized by problems with accurate or fluent work recognition, poor decoding and poor spelling abilities." Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition DSM-5. Page 67.

Dyslexia cannot be "cured" however many children do learn to read with the right evidence-based intervention and support.

What to do?

1. Search for a Facebook group in your area or join Dyslexia Victoria Support (DVS). We also maintain a website <http://dyslexiavictoriasupport.com/>. DVS is an evidence-based group, and members include: parents, teachers, school principals, speech pathologists, psychologists, and adult dyslexics. What does evidence-based mean? "It is important that the program is based on current research evidence and that its effectiveness is supported by independent reviews (i.e. not evaluated solely by the program manufacturer). Structured synthetic phonics (SSP) programs are considered to be evidence-based because very strong independent research collected worldwide shows that SSP programs provide the best opportunity to produce significant literacy improvement." <http://uldforparents.com/>
2. DVS do not support "alternative treatments" for literacy difficulties such as: coloured glasses or overlays, brain training, chiropractic treatment or movement classes, audio computer programs or levelled readers. Reading Recovery and Fountas & Pinnell

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(levelled reading programs) will not help dyslexic children and there is plenty of pre-existing published research to support this statement.

3. If you have *any* suspicions about your child's literacy or numeracy, talk to your child's schoolteacher or kindergarten teacher. If you feel as though your child is not making progress, do more research. Terms like "*s/he will get it*" or "*wait till it clicks*", "*he's a boy it will happen*" are **not** useful and can delay getting help.
4. Start observing your child and making notes on your child's strengths and weaknesses.
5. Start collecting samples of your child's schoolwork and items that demonstrate their strengths and weaknesses.
6. Start building an Independent Learning Plan (ILP) / Independent Education Plan (IEP) Folder. These terms can be used along with Student Support Group (SSG).
<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/how-to-organize-your-childs-iep-binder>. In this folder you will need to keep copies of assessments, any medical assessments, notes, letters, documents, certificates, accomplishments and school reports, NAPLAN results if you have them.
7. Find a good GP or Paediatrician who understands Specific Learning Difficulties and can provide referrals. You will need to establish if they are familiar with a Chronic Disease Management Plan (CDM) or Mental Care Plan. Ask your GP for information about these plans. Children with anxiety or school avoidance are to be taken seriously. Mental health difficulties can occur and it is very important to get help as soon as possible.
8. Ask your teacher to do an assessment or screening for your child. If your teacher is unfamiliar with common assessment tools, ask for recommendations on the DVS Facebook group.

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9. Looking for a diagnosis? It is recommended that when seeking a diagnosis you must have received 6 months intervention, check with the organisation or private clinic what this may mean.

Some organisations will not diagnose under 7 years of age, you will need to establish this in advance and before paying for any services. Children as young as 4 can be screened for dyslexia. Contemporary published studies have shown that the sooner a child receives intervention the sooner the learning gap closes. If in doubt, ask on the DVS Facebook group for advice from the specialists.

10. Universities can provide diagnosis services at a reduced cost. You can contact SPELD Victoria if you need a diagnosis or your school supports your application for a diagnosis, (also see point 9). Also there are many local private psychologists who can provide a diagnosis. You can ask on DVS for recommendations. Getting a diagnosis can be expensive but might be all the evidence you need to get support from your school or when applying for accommodations from VCAA in VCE.
11. Further to an assessment or diagnosis and after you have received your report with recommendations, you will need to check to see if the school has a Support Plan or Independent Learning Plan policy that includes access to a Support Teacher for teaching and daily accommodations in the classroom and for assessments. At some schools this provision does not exist. It can be frustrating, but persevere. You may need to find a specialist tutor. There may be other parents at your school experiencing the same difficulties, ask around, you may find that other parents are already using a specialist tutor. Remember, you are not on your own.
12. Based on your child's recommendations, speak to the school and check that your child's strengths are being utilised and their weaknesses are being accommodated for and how. For example, based on the recommendations by the psychologist or the observations by your teacher, you may ask (or suggest):
 - Could my child receive small group support? If so, how often? What evidence support would this be? Is there any independent scientific published research behind the intervention?

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- Does the school have access to an explicit systematic or direct instruction teaching program for learning difficulties?
 - Suggest minimal copying from chalkboard or whiteboard;
 - Having notes provided by the teacher in a form that can be read by text to speech software;
 - Are the textbooks available for download onto a laptop or PC?
 - Allowed to use a computer / iPad or writing or has a scribe;
 - Are text to speech and audiobooks available during “silent” reading time - you might need to have a conversation with the teacher about the audiobooks and how valuable they can be to kids with learning difficulties?
 - Accommodations: such as extra time for tests and exams, or a reader, or a scribe and breaks
 - Is your child permitted to give oral presentations instead of writing passages for homework?
13. Do you want to find a good dyslexia program that you can use at home? Barton reading and spelling is a great program for home learning. <https://bartonreading.com/> so is Reading Dr <http://www.readingdoctor.com.au/> and Nessy <https://www.nessy.com/uk/>.
14. Do you want to find a specialist tutor? Learning difficulties tutors have specialist training so please check to see their qualifications before committing to any paid help. Contact SPELD (in your state) or the LDA Online Tutor search <https://www.ldaustralia.org/tutor-search.html>. Please ensure that all specialist teachers are VIT registered and have attended some Professional Development or training in Specific Learning Difficulties. If in doubt ask on the DVS Facebook group.
15. Put a support team in place for you and your child: consider immediate family, extended family and friends, your child’s friends, teachers, local community groups.
16. Put some strategies in place to maintain and build your child’s self-esteem and confidence.

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We hope that this document has been of help. If you have any questions, please join the Facebook group or look on our website for resources, <http://dyslexiavictoriasupport.com/>